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The twofold purpose of this dissertation was: (1) to explore employee volunteer programs (EVPs) as corporate social responsibility (CSR) among apparel firms, and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the communities it serves. The four objectives of this study were: (1) to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry, (2) to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy, (3) to examine the employee perspective on EVPs as stakeholders, and (4) to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community. This study addresses gaps within the apparel, marketing, and management literatures regarding the motivations for employee participation in CSR initiatives, such as EVPs, as well as the social consequences of these initiatives for local communities. Thus, this dissertation is one of the first in-depth academic studies to be conducted on EVPs as a CSR strategy in the apparel industry.

An ethnographic approach to research was used to address the purpose and objectives of this study. Data collection methods included participant observation, interviews, and visual documentation. A total of 10 EVP events were observed in the New England and Southeastern areas of the United States. A total of 64 field interviews and 46 semi-structured in-depth interviews with employees of apparel firms and community members were conducted. Visual documentation was used to enrich observations and interview data. Spiggle's (1994) suggestions of qualitative data analysis

were employed to identify patterns in the data, which resulted in the development of three thematic areas used to explore EVPs as CSR: (1) *Laying the Foundation*, (2) *The Employee Perspective*, and (3) *The Community Context*.

This study is one of the first to apply a conceptual framework that integrates the theories of equity, social exchange, and social capital to understand the value of EVPs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the community it serves. Together, the theories offer an understanding of EVPs as CSR, and the outcomes achieved through firm-stakeholder relationships. Findings establish CSR as the foundation of EVPs, and, in turn, highlight the outcomes for local communities. That is through EVPs as CSR, EVPs create partnerships between firms and nonprofits, collectively creating value for multiple stakeholders. As a result, employees and community members work together as one for the betterment of society, which results in social capital.

As revealed in this study, employees of US-based apparel firms expect businesses to contribute to society and see CSR as the connection between the firm, its employees, and the local community. As such, findings indicate that through the strategic application of resources, firms can offer support in the areas that matter most to stakeholders and to make a difference at home. Findings also suggest that, ultimately, employees are motivated to engage in EVP for various reasons, whether a sense of obligation, a desire to help others, spend time with peers, network, or to learn. This study reveals how and why EVPs clearly benefit multiple stakeholders and that it is the community that benefits the most through relationships that forge social capital. That is, the EVP is a conduit of action that allows employees to use time and effort to improve the communities in which

their employers operate. The motivation to participate (equity), when combined with the relationship prompted by the EVP (social exchange) produces social capital that helps to better the community. Thus, it is not a single EVP event, but the totality of multiple events that establishes a firm's value within the community, and more broadly, within society as a whole.

While the findings are significant to enriching and enhancing literature on the topics of CSR, corporate philanthropy, and volunteerism, findings are limited to the publicly traded US-based apparel firms and brands observed in this dissertation. Future studies could examine whether similarities or differences arise that may be related to the geographic location and size of the community and the various cultural differences therein. In the same vein, a cross-cultural study could explore the different global perspectives of CSR strategy and corporate philanthropy in local communities around the world. Additionally, investigating firms with weaker CSR strategies and including employees who are not as committed to CSR initiatives like EVPs would shed light on additional stakeholder perspectives.

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS AS CORPORATE SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY IN THE APPAREL INDUSTRY: AN  
INVESTIGATION OF STAKEHOLDER  
PERCEPTIONS

by

Tara Jennifer Konya

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Greensboro  
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Approved by

---

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This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Andrew and Aaron.

Through perseverance you can achieve anything.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the United States, approximately 62.6 million individuals volunteered for an organization at least once between September 2014 and September 2015. Just under one million of these individuals became aware of the specific volunteer opportunity through their employers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). According to Points of Light, a nonprofit that supports service and volunteerism, employees who volunteer can serve as transformative drivers of social change in communities around the world (Points of Light, 2016). For this reason, volunteering and similar kinds of service activities have become integrated into the operational frameworks of firms, to the extent that these activities are now considered to be a form of corporate social responsibility.

Volunteering is defined as any activity in which an individual's time is freely given to benefit another person, group, or cause (Wilson, 2000). Examples include serving food at a soup kitchen, building affordable housing for the disadvantaged, or mentoring youth. Although any individual can serve as a volunteer, many firms have started to organize opportunities and encourage their employees to volunteer.

Interestingly, volunteerism has been linked to increased employee engagement (Grant, 2012; Paço & Nave, 2013; Rodell & Lynch, 2016), which obviously benefits the firm. In similar vein, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has also been linked to positive

employee engagement (Ferreira & de Oliveira, 2014; Mirvis, 2012), yet few examples of the relationship between the two have been offered in the literature. Thus, an important goal of this dissertation is to examine employee volunteerism as a form of CSR and the impact this kind of activity has on the employee's perception of the firm.

Despite the growing importance placed on the economic value of responsible behaviors by firms, and the positive returns seen from such initiatives, empirical research that examines the issue is limited. Moreover, despite the links between volunteering, employee engagement, and CSR, little is known about the effects of CSR programs on local communities within the United States. Studies offer insight into why employees volunteer (Grant, 2012; Rodell, 2013; Rodell & Lynch, 2016), the effects it has on job performance (Ferreira & de Oliveira, 2014; Korschun, Bhattacharya, & Swain, 2014; Mirvis, 2012; Rodell, 2013), and the overall implications of volunteerism for business (McCallum, Schmid, & Price, 2013; Paço & Nave, 2013; Rodell & Lynch, 2016) yet little is known about the broader impact of such activities on stakeholders, including how these activities may create a cycle of benefit for the firm, employee, and community. Hence, there is a need to understand employee volunteerism as one type of CSR initiative from the viewpoint of those directly impacted by such efforts, specifically employees and community members.

In a similar vein, although the prevalence of firm-sponsored volunteer activities appears to be increasing, research on the topic specific to different industries is lacking. Research that examines volunteerism as CSR specific to various industries provides greater depth to the overall understanding of the kinds of programs that are available and



what makes them successful. For example, through the *Nordstrom Cares* initiative, Nordstrom employees donate and volunteer through the United Way. Nike offers the *Nike Community Ambassador* program, which offers employees the opportunity to make a positive impact in their communities by coaching youth sports. Both Nordstrom and Nike are firms that contribute to the enormous apparel industry sector in the U.S. Indeed, in 2014, the U.S. apparel industry reached an all-time growth level, garnering over \$250 million in sales and representing 10% of the country's labor force (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Although studies exist that address corporate performance and financial outcomes of CSR in apparel, they focus on global CSR initiatives such as ethical sourcing, labor practices, the environment, and supply chain operations (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014; Graafland, 2002; Kaur, 2016; Schramm-Klein et al., 2015; Zaczekiewicz, 2016). Such research rarely focuses on other kinds of CSR strategies used by apparel firms (Schramm-Klein, Morschett, & Swoboda, 2015). To address this gap, the focus of this dissertation is employee volunteer programs as a CSR strategy and specifically as implemented within the apparel industry.

Globally, the apparel industry is valued at \$1.7 trillion, with more than \$250 billion spent annually on apparel in the United States alone (Young, 2017). However, in recent times, apparel firms have been plagued by ethics-related scandals. For example, the 2013 Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh led to the death of 1,129 factory workers. The 2011 Lesotho Africa denim factory toxic waste incident led to hazardous waste and pollution negatively effecting the health of children living in nearby villages. Likewise, over the years there have been numerous "sweatshop" allegations against both Nike and

Gap Inc. involving child labor and poor working conditions. Such indiscretions have forced firms to prove that they are responsible global citizens (Frederick, 2008; Maak, 2008), providing the impetus behind many of their CSR strategies and practices.

However, the apparel industry continues to fall short in terms of its potential for engaging in CSR initiatives. In its annual “Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting,” KPMG International releases the best and the worst CSR by global industry, including 4900 firms in 49 countries and regions. In 2017, oil and gas, along with the chemical and mining industries, led the field with their reporting practices. However, the retail industry, which includes apparel firms, lagged behind, with only 63% of firms reporting corporate responsibility practices. Interestingly, more than two thirds of firms in all sectors, except retail, now report on CSR performance.

An examination of the topic of CSR as it manifests within the apparel industry is greatly needed. As firms are held more and more accountable by consumers, the need for research that specifically explains how firms approach CSR and engage in CSR practices is necessary. Moreover, the impact of these efforts, whether globally or locally, is important to this exploration, in as much as the implications of CSR activities for individuals, communities, and society are largely unknown.

### **Background**

CSR has grown in importance, as views on how firms should embrace social responsibility, and especially global sustainability, have increased (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009; Donia, Ronen, Sirsly, & Bonaccio, 2017; Taghian, D’Souza, & Polonsky, 2014; Yuan, Bao, & Verbeke, 2011). Low wages and increased production

have led to excessive textile waste, thrusting apparel firms into the CSR spotlight (Zackiewicz, 2016). Due to the size and scope of the apparel industry, apparel firms are often tasked with the responsibility of balancing CSR initiatives with a profit-driven business strategy. To fully understand the needs of the industry, it is important to define CSR strategies relative to it. For example, corporate philanthropy is a very common conduit of CSR. Moreover, while the firm can outline strategies and goals related to CSR, it is the individual employee, as a stakeholder, who must implement any CSR initiative (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Jones, Newman, Shao, & Cooke, 2018; Korschun et al., 2014; Lam & Khare, 2010; Pedersen, Lauesen, & Kourula, 2017). In the following sections, each of these related areas — CSR, corporate philanthropy, and the employee as stakeholder — are discussed in turn.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

CSR refers to the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of an organization (Carroll, 1979) and it is considered to be the framework for good corporate citizenship. There are many different forms that CSR can take. For example, CSR can be the codes of conduct embraced by a firm, or it can be education, employee development, the environment, and/or equal opportunity. CSR can pertain to ethics, labor practices, philanthropy, quality of life, social responsibility, stakeholder transparency, values, and finally, volunteerism (Gaskill-Fox, Hyllegard, & Ogle, 2014).

Largely a product of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of CSR has only begun to flourish in the past fifty years (Carroll, 2008). Correspondingly, in the past two decades, CSR has developed into an important construct in both the academic and business

domains (Fatma & Rahman, 2015; Godfrey & Hatch, 2007; Gupta & Hodges, 2012; Okoye, 2009). Academic research on CSR has grown markedly since the 1990s (Brown & Dacin, 1997; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Mohr & Webb, 2005; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001) when the “3Ps” approach to business (people, planet, profit) was introduced to further advance the conceptual framework of CSR (Elkington, 1997). Today, the 3Ps framework is used interchangeably to justify not only CSR, but ethical and sustainable behavior in organizations. Society expects a firm to fulfil the civic duties applicable to the 3Ps framework (Jones, Comfort, & Hiller, 2011; Wilson, 2015), rather than simply seeking to make a profit.

CSR has grown in importance as views on how organizations should embrace social responsibility have diversified (Winston, 2016). Reducing carbon emissions, alleviating environmental impact, improving fair labor practices, and addressing workers’ rights have all been discussed as issues comprising the broad mission of CSR (Zackiewicz, 2016). According to the US SIF: The Forum for Sustainable and Responsible Investment (2016), the assets of organizations engaged in CSR activities continue to grow. Thus, some findings suggest that the impact of CSR has significance not just for society or the firm’s bottom line, but for all the various stakeholders involved (Lacey & Kennett-Hensel, 2010).

At the same time, CSR has been criticized as largely a reactive response to negative social activities rather than a proactive method or approach to business (May, Cheney & Roper, 2007; McMillan, 2007). Yet, some studies indicate that CSR leads to the positive financial performance of a firm, such that now it is even considered the cost

of doing business. For example, many firms have senior management devoted to CSR, including VPs and C-level executives. As Manely and Shrode (1990) state, “Business activities do not merely provide economic effects, but also determine the conditions of community living and shape the intellectual and moral tones of the age” (p. 15). Although organizations that follow these practices can reap the financial benefits (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Garriga & Melé, 2004; Lee, 2008; Sprinkle & Maines, 2010; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988) in order for CSR to positively affect financial performance, consumers must be aware of a firm’s CSR activities to be able to attribute these activities to it (Aaker, 1996; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Consequently, most CSR research has examined consumers’ perceptions of CSR. Yet there are many other relevant stakeholder groups. While there have been multiple studies done to assess consumer perceptions of a firm’s CSR-related activities, few studies examine other stakeholder perceptions, specifically the employee of the firm. Likewise, as most CSR research has focused on ways a firm can lessen the negative impact on natural or human resources, there are other kinds of impact that can occur through CSR, including community building through philanthropy.

### **Corporate Philanthropy as CSR**

One of the oldest strategies utilized by firms to demonstrate CSR is *corporate philanthropy*. Philanthropy may include a range of activities, from giving money and making in-kind donations, to encouraging employee volunteerism and engaging in social cause-related marketing and advertising (Merz, Peloza, & Chen, 2010). To fully understand the scope of CSR, Carroll (1991) introduced a conceptual model depicting the

four CSR constructs (see Figure 1). Each construct addresses a critical responsibility of business: (1) *economic responsibility*, (2) *legal responsibility*, (3) *ethical responsibility*, and (4) *discretionary* (later categorized as philanthropic) *responsibility*. Corporate philanthropy is generally understood as the most discretionary type of responsibility under the umbrella of CSR (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). Carroll's model is a pyramid shape, depicting the level of importance of each construct (Carroll, 1991). Carroll's pyramid model is considered to be seminal within CSR research, and it is commonly held that for CSR to be universally accepted, it must encompass all four components of business.

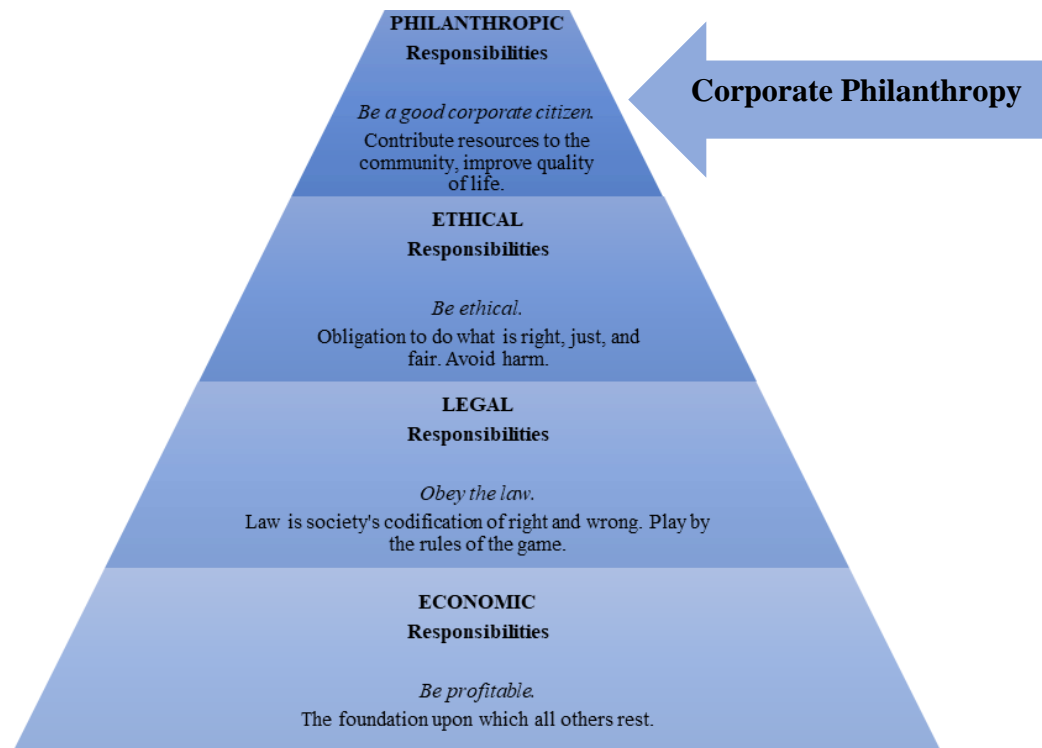


Figure 1. The Pyramid of Social Responsibility. From "The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders" by A.B. Carroll, 1991, *Business Horizons*, July-August 1991, p. 42.

Although philanthropy is just one of the four constructs of CSR, through it firms can flourish alongside their communities, or as Davis (1973) states, “a better society produces a better environment for business” (p. 313). Some studies suggest that philanthropic efforts have the capacity to educate and empower employees, creating a lasting change in local communities, and particularly when corporate philanthropy occurs through volunteer efforts (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014; Gautier & Pache, 2015). Thus, it is important to understand the impact of corporate philanthropy on the community, but particularly from the perspective of employees, as they are key players, or stakeholders, with respect to a firm’s volunteer-based philanthropic efforts.

### **Positioning the Employee as Stakeholder**

When it comes to CSR, stakeholders are important not just to the implementation of a firm’s initiatives, but to achieving beneficial outcomes. Freeman (1984) divided the stakeholder into two groups: *internal* and *external*. Internal stakeholders are owners, customers, employees and suppliers; while external stakeholders are governments, competitors, consumer advocates, environmentalists, special interest groups and the media. As discussed above, although CSR is often explored from the perspective of the consumer as a stakeholder, little is known regarding the perspective of the employee as stakeholder and what this means for a firm’s CSR engagement relative to the communities in which it operates (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Employees in particular are the ones who are “on the ground,” implementing CSR programs, whether at home or abroad. Likewise, there is a growing interest in the role of management and how their values influence the ideals, attitudes, and behaviors of other

managers and employees regarding CSR (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Hejjas, Miller, & Scarles, 2018), as well as the extent to which CSR strategies are actually implemented (O’Riordan & Fairbrass, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, overall, the literature is lacking in various stakeholder or “micro-level” viewpoints, with a specific need to understand the behavior of employees within a firm as important to its CSR strategy. In a 2016 survey on employee engagement by Cone Communications, it was revealed that when it comes to corporate philanthropy, employees want a range of options to choose from, and they want to engage in them on their own terms. Thus, it is necessary to better understand not just how employees help ensure CSR initiatives succeed, but how CSR is used as a tool to recruit, retain, and engage employees.

Stakeholders of a firm can exist anywhere, including where the firm does business. Historically, business has played a significant role in the development of U.S. cities and communities. Thus, it has become an expectation that U.S. firms foster leadership efforts that make a positive impact within the communities in which they do business (Maignan & Ralston, 2002). In the context of business, “community relations” is defined as, “whether the organization participates in community service (e.g., donating to charity or encouraging employees to volunteer for local community)” (Rupp, Shao, Thornton, & Skarlicki, 2013, p. 906). Firms have been engaging in various kinds of community relations for years, investing employee time, skills, and resources to improve the quality of life for those living in the community. A variety of terms are used to refer



to these community-related practices, including *fellowship*, *community engagement*, *volunteering*, and *service* (Hills & Mahmud, 2007).

For the purposes of consistency, throughout this dissertation the term *employee volunteer program* (EVP) will be used to refer to a firm's philanthropic emphasis on employee volunteerism provided through programs targeting the local community. To be more specific, the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteering, Points of Light, offers the following definition that will be applied throughout this dissertation, "[An] EVP is defined as a planned, managed effort that seeks to motivate and enable employees to effectively serve community needs through the leadership of the employer, [an EVP is] typically one component of a company's CSR program" (2014, p. 2).

Research conducted on EVPs thus far suggests that participation in these programs can improve the firm's reputation among stakeholders (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014) and increase job performance among its employees (Rodell, 2013). However, as of yet, none of the existing research has investigated the role of an EVP from the perspective of the individual employee. The reciprocal relationship developed through volunteer programs has the potential to benefit the firm, the employee, and the community (Deigh, Farquhar, Palazzo, & Siano, 2016). Research is needed that helps shed light on how, through EVPs, an apparel firm can not only positively impact its reputation, or influence employee job performance, but make a positive impact on the local community. Such research will offer a new angle on the topic of CSR and add depth and breadth to the literature on corporate philanthropy as CSR.

## **Purpose and Objectives**

Because there are many opportunities to further build on the existing knowledge related to CSR, as described in the previous sections, the twofold purpose of this study is: (1) to explore employee volunteer programs (EVPs) as CSR among apparel firms, and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the communities it serves. The following objectives were developed to address this purpose: (1) to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry, (2) to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy, (3) to examine the employee perspective on EVPs as stakeholders, and (4) to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community.

Preliminary research was conducted in the summer of 2016 to guide the development of the purpose and objectives of this dissertation. The preliminary study was exploratory in nature and designed to investigate CSR practices within the U.S. apparel industry specifically from the employee perspective. The research involved two types of data. First, secondary data were collected through an analysis of CSR initiatives from corporate websites of twelve of the world's largest apparel firms based on Forbes 2016 "Global 2000." For the purposes of this study, only U.S. based apparel firms were chosen. The twelve firms were Coach, Foot Locker, Gap Incorporated, Hanesbrands, L Brands, Nike, Nordstrom, PVH Corporation, Ralph Lauren, Ross, TJX, and VF Corporation. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 individuals who are employees of retailers that sell apparel. Participants worked either in retail stores or

corporate offices, and job titles included sales lead, general manager, as well as director. Initial findings of the preliminary research pointed to a wide range of perspectives surrounding the topic of CSR. Data revealed a broad set of guiding principles relative to the effects of CSR on local and global communities. Findings pointed to the role of employees in the implementation of CSR, and established the need for a broader, yet more in-depth investigation into EVPs as CSR that will be accomplished by this dissertation.

### **Methodological Framework**

As will be discussed in depth in Chapter III, a qualitative approach to data collection was employed for this dissertation. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Social experiences are best investigated and given meaning through ethnographic data collection methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). To this end, multiple methods were used to collect data.

Participant observation comprised the first method. For the purposes of achieving the research objectives, I observed ten different employee volunteer events organized by apparel firms. While engaging in each event I assumed the participant-observer role (Merriam, 1998). According to Gans (1999), the participant-observer joins in social situations but is only partially involved in order to function as a researcher and gather data. This role allows for observation and the systematic recording of behavior in a

natural environment, permitting rich data to be collected (Merriam, 1998). Visual documentation of the EVP also occurred. Through the use of visual documentation, photographs evoked memories of the field experience, enriching both observations and conversations with visual records (Peñaloza & Cayla, 2006). Last, interviews were conducted both in the field and more formally after each event.

A total of seventy-eight interviews were conducted. Interviewing is the most commonly used method of data collection in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). These interviews were designed as conversations with a purpose (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) and questions were developed to fully understand the phenomenon of the firm-employee-community relationship. Interviewing allowed for an understanding of the employee's perspective on what the volunteer event means and the impact it has. A total of fifty-six employees were interviewed either in the field or subsequently in-depth after the EVP occurred. Employees at various levels within the firm were interviewed and included a mix of managers, part-time associates and various corporate level positions. In addition, twelve community members were interviewed to provide an additional stakeholder perspective. Community members consisted of employees and volunteers of the nonprofits involved with the EVPs observed in this dissertation.

### **Conceptual Scope and Significance**

As discussed above, although CSR is the focus of a great deal of academic research, little is known about the topic from the perspective of the employee as a stakeholder. According to Aguinis and Glavas (2012), less than 4% of the total CSR literature focuses on the employee. Likewise, there is a dearth of research on the impact

that apparel firms have on the communities they do business in. Carroll and Shabana (2010) posited that the business case in favor of CSR is made through the documentation of its positive economic impact on financial performance. Thus, findings of this dissertation contribute to empirical research on CSR in general, as it helps build a case for stakeholder involvement at the organizational level. Moreover, this dissertation helps to address a gap in knowledge regarding apparel industry CSR strategies and practices, as well as the implications of these efforts for local communities.

In order to further develop CSR as a concept, Aguinis and Glavas (2012) posit that behavior needs to be analyzed both from the macro-level and micro-level, but particularly the micro-level. Starting with the employee's perspective is a unique approach to the investigation of CSR at the micro-level, as it allows for the discovery of benefits of CSR beyond the social good and financial rewards it offers (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). Employees execute the organization's CSR initiatives through both strategy and decision-making (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Although previous studies have linked the consumer to CSR at the micro-level (Fatma & Rahman, 2015; Green & Peloza, 2015) little is known about the perceptions of other stakeholders (Rupp et al., 2013). As a result, this dissertation is one of the first to focus on the employee as a stakeholder as part of a micro-level understanding of CSR.

Existing research offers explanations for why organizations engage in CSR (Jones, 1995), what happens when firms engage in CSR (Peloza, Hudson, & Hassey, 2009; Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008), and what conditions are best for this engagement to occur (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Sekar & Dyaram, 2017). What is not currently available

in the literature is an understanding of the processes and fundamental mechanisms through which CSR initiatives can lead to a particular outcome, such as social change (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). For example, firms engage in CSR to improve stakeholder relations (Rodell, 2013; Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006) and enhance organizational identity (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014; Jones, 2010); however, little is known as to how CSR initiatives are actually implemented at the micro-level of the stakeholder.

Firms seek to offer added benefits to motivate their employees. For example, Gap Inc. and Macy's both provide incentives, such as paid time-off and donation matching, to encourage engagement in EVPs and other CSR initiatives. In contrast, federal or state governments rarely offer incentives to organizations seeking to address prevalent economic and social issues (i.e., unemployment, poverty, literacy, etc.). Thus, U.S. firms help to fill the economic and social support gaps for those in need through their philanthropic initiatives. Yet, it is not known how effective these efforts are in terms of stakeholder buy-in. This dissertation addresses this gap in knowledge regarding the motivation for participation in CSR initiatives among employees.

Gaps also exist in terms of the social consequences of CSR initiatives (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). For example, public policy is defined as a course of action to address a set of problems (Pal, 2005). However, CSR as a course of action and its use in creating public policy to effect social change and/or address local or national problems has not been the focus of empirical investigation. Moreover, corporate initiatives and public policy are rarely discussed in annual sustainability reporting (Davis & Searcy, 2010). Currently, public policy-related implications of CSR are mainly recognized at the global

level (i.e., Africa, China, Germany, Great Britain, New Zealand, and Scandinavia).

However, realizing the full potential of CSR could be the first step in increasing overall corporate involvement in CSR, not just abroad, but also at home. Likewise, considering how CSR can improve a firm's community relations offers points of departure for developing public policy. In this dissertation, CSR is examined at the local level, thereby providing a much-needed investigation of the consequences of such actions for local communities.

Globally, there is an understanding of the need for organizations and government to work together, particularly when it comes to implementing public policy. Specifically, in the U.S. there are limited partnerships between business, government, and local communities. Despite the fact that the U.S. Department of State exhibits a "strong commitment to CSR...in a comprehensive approach to providing support and guidance on areas of responsible corporate conduct" (U.S. Department of State, 2013), the focus is on global corporate citizenship versus local or domestic endeavors. Additionally, the Secretary of State's *Award for Corporate Excellence* globally recognizes environmental sustainability, human, and labor rights. The 2016 recipients represented Uruguay, Vietnam, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Mongolia, and the Philippines. Honors and awards given by the U.S. government recognizing the benefits of CSR are not rewarding U.S. firms that address local socio-economic needs, further pointing to the need for investigation of CSR initiatives in the US. Thus, the findings of this dissertation offer a perspective on the extent to which CSR, and specifically corporate philanthropy, can have a positive impact within the US.

Some researchers posit that CSR stands to flourish conceptually through the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework (Folse, Niedrich, & Grau, 2010; Tschirhart, 2005; Van Marrewijk, 2003). Consumer choice theory (Thaler, 1980), attribution theory (Heider 1958; Kelley 1967), and the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen 1975), have been utilized previously to understand the ethical dimensions of organizational decision-making. Thus, it makes sense that they are the most frequently applied theories within CSR research. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993) is used as a conceptual framework. Social capital refers to the collective value embedded in all social networks which enables people to act together for the betterment of society (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993). Using social capital theory to investigate EVPs allows for the study of the relationship between the firm, the employee, and the community through CSR.

As part of the framework, both social exchange theory and equity theory are used to address how and why employees may or may not chose to be involved in a firm's CSR and corporate philanthropy initiatives. Equity (Adams, 1965) explains the motivation to participate in a fair and just initiative, while social exchange (Blau, 1964) explains the reciprocal social obligations of a firm and its stakeholders. As a stakeholder, the employee can provide positive or negative value to the firm's CSR initiatives depending on his or her individual perspective. In turn, this value can have a direct impact on the community, providing a linkage between the firm and social change. This is a novel approach to the topic and one that is appropriate given that the focus of this dissertation is



that of the employee as stakeholder. A study of CSR from the viewpoint of the employee and specific to corporate philanthropy deepens CSR research, while providing important implications for firms and offering public policy opportunities.

Finally, this dissertation offers a unique approach to data collection on the topic of CSR. Qualitative research offers an insider's perspective into a phenomenon. In this case, a qualitative approach allows for the in-depth investigation of the topic of CSR from the perspective of the individuals who are directly involved in the implementation of corporate philanthropic initiatives. In particular, qualitative studies are needed to achieve the necessary depth and improved overall understanding of CSR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Godfrey & Hatch, 2006; Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2014; Reinecke, Arnold, & Palazzo, 2016; Salzmann, Ionescu-Somers, & Steger 2005), an understanding that includes the perspective of different stakeholders. However, most CSR studies rely on quantitative experimental approaches to study the topic (Fatma & Rahman, 2015). Likewise, most consumer CSR awareness studies have been performed in hypothetical and experimental settings (Maignan, 2001; Mohr et al., 2001). In order to generalize findings, research needs to move in the direction of real settings versus experimental scenarios (Fatma & Rahman, 2015). Thus, this dissertation fills this methodological gap by employing a qualitative, and specifically ethnographic, research design.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I introduced the topic of this dissertation. I began with a definition of CSR and the philanthropic subset of employee volunteerism. I then described the purpose and objectives of the study, followed by the methodological framework

employed to address them. Discussion of the scope and significance of this dissertation, as well as potential theoretical considerations, was also provided. In the next chapter, the research purpose and objectives are framed by a review of the relevant literature.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

As introduced in Chapter I, the twofold purpose of this study is (1) to explore employee volunteer programs (EVPs) as CSR among apparel firms, and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the communities it serves. Four objectives were developed to address this purpose: (1) to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry, (2) to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy, (3) to examine the employee perspective on EVPs as stakeholders, and (4) to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community.

This chapter includes a discussion of existing research relevant to the topics of CSR, corporate philanthropy, and employee volunteer programs. To this end, the chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part provides an overview of CSR. In the second part, the concept of CSR in the apparel industry is examined. Third, as a CSR strategy, the concept of corporate volunteerism is explored, and in particular, EVPs implemented by apparel firms. The fourth part includes a discussion of theories and key concepts relative to this dissertation.

## **The Foundation of Corporate Social Responsibility**

Broadly defined, CSR is a firm's profit-driven activities as formed by societal and stakeholder obligations (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). In order to fully understand CSR, the historic foundation of the topic must be examined. Formal writings on the topic of social responsibility emerged primarily in the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Carroll, 1999) and mirrors the growth in numbers of large corporations also happening during that time.

### **The Evolution of CSR**

Businesses flourished after the innovation and achievements of the Industrial Revolution in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this success was particularly the case in the apparel industry, largely due to innovations in mass production (Dickson, Locker, & Eckman, 2009). At the same time, production in mills and factories brought about poor working conditions. In response, unions were established to argue fair wages and improve workplace protections for all employees (Dickson et al., 2009).

As a term, *social responsibility* is referenced as early as the 1930s, but does not come into full use until the 1950s (Carroll, 1991). The end of the depression in the 1930s reduced economic problems, but, in turn, revealed numerous social problems. As a result, businesses were called upon to help alleviate these problems (Davis & Blomstrom, 1975). The first definitive book on modern day social responsibility was written by Howard R. Bowen in 1953 titled, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*. As an economist, Bowen sought to articulate the responsibilities of business as it relates to society,

discussing social responsibility as, "... the obligations of businessmen [*sic*] to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society" (Bowen, 1953, p. 6). Bowen's definition of social responsibility has since been referenced over and over in empirical studies and literature reviews on the topic of CSR.

A key aspect of CSR today is *corporate philanthropy*, yet throughout most of early U.S. corporate history, firms were barred from donating to charitable causes. The law stipulated that all corporate assets must directly benefit the stockholder (Himmelstein, 1997). However, in the 1952 court case of *A.P. Smith Manufacturing Company v. Barlow*, the courts ruled against the stockholders in favor of a corporate donation to Princeton University (Himmelstein, 1997), thereby paving the way towards corporate philanthropy as it is practiced today.

Spurred by activist groups advocating greater social responsibility among businesses, the 1960s saw the emergence of several differences in opinion, along with an abundance of literature on CSR (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991; Davis & Blomstrom, 1975). Keith Davis (1960) was the first to discuss social responsibility as going beyond pure economic interests to encompass social interests. Joseph McGuire (1963) would then expand on Davis' call to move beyond basic economic considerations. McGuire stated that it is the obligation of business to meet the basic needs of society. Business has the resources to help society, and, in turn, society's problems can be made into profit (Davis, 1973). Today, a similar kind of thinking guides corporate philanthropic efforts.

In contrast, Milton Friedman (1962) took a controversial and slightly more negative approach to the idea of corporate social responsibility. Friedman stated that socially responsible behavior undermines society, specifically taking money away from the shareholder by expanding a Socialist view and decreasing a firms' economic efficiency. For Friedman, the goal of business is to maximize profits and his ideology continues to be argued today (Carroll, 1979; Dahlsrud, 2008; Davis, 1973; Davis & Blomstrom, 1975; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Yet, interestingly, in 1984, Friedman's economic-driven, shareholder view would be used to develop Freeman's (1984) collaborative socially responsible perspective, known today as *stakeholder theory*. Stakeholder theory is an important concept in this dissertation, therefore it will be discussed in detail throughout this chapter.

By the 1970s, a more reconciliatory tone was offered by Davis (1973), who argued the case both for and against social responsibility. His conclusion was that social responsibility has proven to be effective, therefore, businesses should integrate social responsibility into everyday decision-making practices (Davis, 1973). Davis (1973) also identified the key role of the manager in CSR initiatives, in that the manager must pursue profits, yet do so in a socially responsible manner. Also during the 1970s, Archie Carroll (1979) presented a conceptual model describing the essential aspects of CSR. Carroll's model offers four types of responsibilities to fully address the obligations of business: (1) *economic responsibilities*, (2) *legal responsibilities*, (3) *ethical responsibilities*, and (4) *discretionary* (later categorized as philanthropic) *responsibilities*. Each category lies on a continuum and is not mutually exclusive of the others (Carroll, 1979).

What began as a voluntary movement soon developed into a mandate that led to an investment in both business and community. The 1980s evolved from the era known as “doing good” into the time period of “doing better” (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Wartick and Cochran (1985) built upon Carroll’s framework, laying out what they claimed to be the missing pieces of CSR research and developed a *corporate social performance* framework, the first of many conceptual advances that framed business and society as a “partnership.” Modifications were made to Carroll’s model to incorporate the dimensions of principles, processes, and policies, with the biggest departure from Carroll being the implementation of a policies dimension. The model continued to evolve in 1991 when Wood (1991) linked corporate social performance with several related theories, including stakeholder theory, social issue management theory, and organizational institutionalism.

By the 1990s, CSR began to reflect the social obligations of business. As stated by Manley and Shrode (1990), “Business activities do not merely provide economic effects, but also determine the conditions of community living and shape the intellectual and moral tones of the age” (p. 15). In response to the growing need for theory to explain the actions of CSR, Carroll (1991) developed the pyramid construct of CSR (see Figure 1, page 8) depicting the four responsibilities and their relationships to each other, resulting in the simultaneous fulfillment of the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic needs of society (Carroll, 1991). Carroll’s pyramid construct continues to be utilized in the academic literature today and is the conceptual model of CSR that is used in this

dissertation. Carroll's perspective ultimately fostered an expansion in empirical research on CSR that continued through the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The most recent crucial advancement in CSR thought was the introduction of the *3Ps* approach to business. In 1997, *Cannibals with Forks – The Triple Bottom Line of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* was published by John Elkington. Elkington developed the three-pronged approach to sustainability known as the *Triple Bottom Line*, which consists of people, planet, and profit (3Ps). Since 1997, research has typically employed this approach, particularly by differentiating between the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of CSR while emphasizing the interdependence between them (Jones, Comfort, & Hiller, 2011; Wilson, 2015). Moreover, Elkington's Triple Bottom Line concept often guides the dissemination of CSR in trade publications and within corporate sustainability reports. Likewise, as will be discussed in depth in Chapter III, the 3Ps approach to CSR was used as a guide for selecting the sample for data collection in this dissertation.

At the same time that the literature on CSR was growing, so were scandals among major corporations. These scandals would ultimately force firms to employ CSR in order to act as global citizens (Frederick, 2008; Maak, 2008). For example, Nike faced sweatshop allegations, along with boycotts, due to the poor working conditions found in its factories abroad. CSR was thus a reactive response to negative social activities rather than a proactive measure of business (May et al., 2007; McMillan, 2007), leading to the effects of *greenwashing*, or the use of CSR communications to hide transgressions. Even today, companies that sell apparel, such as Walmart and H&M, are often accused of



greenwashing through their CSR communications in order to improve the image of their brands (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015).

By the 2000s, academics became more unified in a definition of CSR, which allowed for an increase in research focusing on how CSR operates versus defining what it is (Freeman & Hasnaoui, 2011). With fewer definitions of CSR being developed and an increase in empirical research, alternative themes emerged as corporate social performance, stakeholder theory, and business ethics theory (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). However, there continued to be a need to focus on the development of theory within the field of social responsibility (Carroll, 1999; Lee, 2008; Salzmänn, Ionescu-Somers, & Steger, 2005; Wood, 1991). Even today, little theoretical attention has been paid to understanding why firms choose to act in socially responsible ways and why they do not. Theories would also help to better link the motivations of business with the goals of CSR. Clearly, it is through empirical research framed by theory that the topic of CSR can continue to expand through the 21<sup>st</sup> century, providing theory building along with theory testing. As Liket and Simaens (2015) point out, this means that more use of qualitative methods would be beneficial for advancing the study of CSR overall. As will be discussed in Chapter III, this argument provides part of the rationale for the decision to employ qualitative methods in this dissertation.

### **Corporate Philanthropy as CSR**

CSR was developed as a means for firms to incorporate goals beyond economic gain into their strategies and operations. While the concept of CSR has evolved over time, as discussed in Chapter I, Carroll's (1991) pyramid construct remains the definitive

framework for depicting the four core responsibilities of a firm (see Figure 1, page 8). According to Carroll's framework, the economic responsibility of business is to produce goods and services that consumers need and want, while making an acceptable profit in the process. Legal responsibilities include abiding by laws and regulations of federal, state, and local governments. While economic and legal responsibilities represent business norms, it is the ethical responsibility of a firm to consider expectations of various stakeholders, including a fair and just representation of business. Last, philanthropic responsibilities encompass actions of a firm that are in response to society's expectations of good corporate citizenship. As such, corporate philanthropy is an important element of CSR (Sheth & Babiak, 2010), and is the core responsibility that forms the focus of this dissertation.

Corporate philanthropy is defined as "the voluntary business giving of money, time or in-kind goods, without any direct commercial benefit, to one or more organization whose core purpose is to benefit community welfare" (Madden, Scaife, & Crissman, 2006, p. 49). Corporate philanthropy can involve donating money, goods, or services, as well as donations of time through volunteerism (Austin, 2000; Galaskiewicz & Colman, 2006; Wymer & Samu, 2003). In a study on consumer perceptions and the importance of various CSR initiatives (Arli & Lasmono, 2010), consumers rank philanthropy second in importance, behind economic responsibility but ahead of legal and ethical. It is therefore not surprising that corporate philanthropy, in the form of donations to local charities, has been used to influence purchase decisions. A firm's

philanthropic initiatives often will contribute to the positive attitudes consumers develop toward it (Grau & Folse, 2007; Oppewal, Alexander, & Sullivan, 2006).

Firms that work closely with customers, such as retailers, often use philanthropy to represent good corporate citizenship (Dabic, Colovic, Lamotte, Painter-Morland, & Brozovi, 2016). For example, Nordstrom donates 1% of all gift card sales, including amounts added to existing gift cards, to qualified nonprofit organizations in the communities that they operate in. Additionally, Nordstrom employees support United Way organizations through donations and volunteerism. As Porter and Kramer (2002) stated, “true strategic giving...addresses important social and economic goals simultaneously, targeting areas of competitive context where the company and society both benefit because the firm brings unique assets and expertise” (p. 58). Consequently, corporate philanthropy is typically reported by firms as a “partnership with the community,” and a way of giving to society that helps people to help themselves (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014).

In corporate philanthropy, a firm’s interest in supporting a nonprofit and the particular relationship that is formed typically coincides with a nonprofit’s mission (Wymer & Samu, 2003). For example, as part of its philanthropic mission, Ross Stores supports academic achievement and the development of life skills among young people who need it most. To achieve this mission, Ross Stores partners with the Boy and Girls Club of America. This particular nonprofit seeks to enable all young people, especially those in need, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens.

This “relationship” supports the goals of both the firm and the nonprofit, while also benefiting the local community.

In a review of 15 case studies, Austin (2000) examined the value achieved when a for-profit firm seeks to form a collaboration with a nonprofit. Austin revealed that the value of the resulting philanthropic activity must be relevant to all stakeholders, as the more centrally-aligned the purpose is to the nonprofit and firm’s strategy and mission, the richer the collaboration (Austin, 2000). Benefits to the firm from these partnerships can include favorable publicity, enhanced public goodwill, and greater public awareness (Gautier & Pache, 2015; Wymer & Samu, 2003). Yet, in spite of the payoffs, Porter and Kramer (2002) argued that firms have typically failed to realize the full value that can be gained from corporate philanthropy. However, this may be starting to change, as some figures suggest that nearly 60% of all firms in the U.S. offer paid time-off for employees who are interested in volunteering (America’s Charities, 2015).

Philanthropy creates word of mouth and free publicity for firms with small promotional budgets, as it promotes consumer loyalty and attracts customers that are interested in supporting socially responsible companies (Amato & Amato, 2012). In this way, consumers are both community members and stakeholders. That is, a for-profit firm will often join with a nonprofit to address a social problem identified as important by both (Austin, 2000; Jones, 2010), thereby allowing consumers to participate and support a firm’s philanthropic efforts. One example of this is TJX’s mission of providing basic needs for all people and the firm’s support of local food banks. TJX donates supplies to food drives and employees volunteer their personal time to hunger-relief organizations.

Additionally, once a year, TJX's three U.S.-based brands (T.J. Maxx, Marshalls, and HomeGoods) team up with customers to help combat hunger by raising money for local food bank organizations across the country. Thus, a strong motivation for a nonprofit to participate in a partnership with a for-profit firm is often the potential for additional funding (Wymer & Samu, 2003) achieved through awareness and donations. That is, CSR partnerships not only benefit the nonprofit in the form of increased donations (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004), but also through the public awareness achieved by the partnership (Amato & Amato, 2012; Austin, 2000; Gautier & Pache, 2015).

A philanthropic relationship between a firm and a nonprofit can develop emotional connections at both the individual and organizational level (Austin, 2000). As such, a firm may seek to support a particular nonprofit that its target market cares about (e.g. Girls on the Run, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, or Save the Children) or allow its employees to use resources of the firm to support a cause they personally care about (Wymer & Samu, 2003). All of these actions can strengthen the relationship between the firm, the nonprofit, and the community. Interestingly, according to Wymer and Samu (2003), philanthropy as a form of CSR requires the least amount of commitment from a firm in terms of resources and managerial involvement. Yet, Timberland reported a cost of nearly \$2 million annually in lost sales due to the day-long organized volunteer activities and the paid time-off that it provides for employees to volunteer (Pereira, 2003).

Although philanthropic efforts can benefit the firm both directly and indirectly, it is also important to understand how a firm's stakeholders respond to CSR practices, especially employees. According to the literature, engagement with local communities can increase a firm's profit while building employee morale (Amato & Amato, 2012; Gautier & Pache, 2015; Jones, 2010; Madden et al., 2006). In a study by Jones (2010), employees responded positively when encouraged to volunteer during paid work hours. Such is the case with outdoor retailer REI's #optoutside campaign. On Black Friday (the day after Thanksgiving), all stores close and REI employees are encouraged to spend time outside helping nonprofit partners (such as the ASPCA, Sierra Club, and U.S. Play Coalition), government agencies, and a short list of companies who care for the outdoors. However, as will be discussed later, it is important to note that employee resentment may also occur if similar philanthropic acts occur during an economic downturn or a period of lower stock prices, layoffs, or pay freezes (Wymer & Samu, 2003).

To aggregate the literature on corporate philanthropy, Liket and Simaens (2015) conducted a comprehensive review of corporate philanthropy in 85 journal articles published from 1973 to 2012. As a result, the authors noted a significant gap in research on corporate philanthropy from the individual perspective. Instead, the majority of studies focused on the organizational or institutional level, thereby pointing to the need for studies that examine the individual, and especially the employee, perspective. Further, Liket and Simaens' (2015) analysis found that perspectives were mainly of upper-level managers and CEOs, pointing to a need for examination of a variety of employee

perspectives. This dissertation therefore fills a void in the literature through examination of the employees involved in firm-led philanthropic activities.

According to Amato and Amato (2012), firms vary in their philanthropic efforts based on sector, usually due to differences in degrees of public contact and public relations efforts. For example, in an international comparison of Chinese versus foreign retailers operating in mainland China, Kolk, Hong, and van Dolen (2010) revealed that foreign retailers relied on corporate philanthropy to fulfill CSR obligations. In the study, four large Chinese retailers were compared with the four largest international firms in China, with Walmart being the only U.S. company represented in this group. It was found that of the eight companies, Walmart was the only firm to extensively communicate social and community programs, pointing to the greater impact that the U.S. industry makes in terms of CSR when compared to its global peers. In contrast, a study on CSR in the professional sports industry (Sheth & Babiak, 2010) found that teams emphasized the importance of connecting with the local community, and that philanthropy comprised a significant part of the sport team's CSR efforts. Thus, while international retailers and the sports industry identify the need for community investment through corporate philanthropy, there is a gap in knowledge that identifies similar initiatives among apparel firms.

Philanthropy enhances both a firm's image and its reputation, much like CSR in general. Motives for participation in corporate philanthropy typically differ by industry and can depend on firm size. Often, corporate philanthropy includes an expectation of giving, a perceived business benefit, and/or the desire to pursue personal charitable

interests (Amato & Amato, 2012; Liket & Simaens, 2015; Madden et al., 2006). For example, in a study of small to medium enterprises in Australia (Madden et al., 2006), local commitments were found to be important. That is, business owners felt little to no obligation to support nationwide nonprofits, but instead they emphasized supporting local organizations (Madden et al., 2006). Additionally, the authors found that a carryover-effect occurred when Australian businesses were bought out by U.S. corporations. The newly acquired business increased its commitment to local giving and support for nonprofits, in line with U.S. community-based initiatives (Madden et al., 2006). Amato and Amato's (2012) study on corporate philanthropy focused on the retail industry, with one segment being apparel, however, in their study, firm philanthropy was aggregated, making differentiation between monetary and in-kind giving (such as volunteering) difficult to discern. Thus, there is a gap in knowledge regarding the kind of philanthropic efforts that retail firms engage in, and especially apparel firms.

Although nonprofits perceive corporate philanthropy as a strategic business model, with mutual benefits for both the nonprofit and firm (Austin, 2000; Rumsey & White, 2009), such relationships can also be risky for nonprofits especially if transgressions occur by the for-profit firm (Andreasen, 2012; Lichtenstein et al., 2004). When that happens, the reputation of the nonprofit can be negatively affected (Wymer & Samu, 2003). Nonprofits must therefore seek a partnership that offers a mutual value exchange for all parties (Austin, 2000; Rumsey & White, 2009; Wymer & Samu, 2003). That is, it is important to consider all stakeholders relative to a firm and the nonprofit when establishing a relationship.



## **The Stakeholder**

Despite the fact that the term *stakeholder* was first utilized in the 1960s (Freeman & Reed, 1983) it was not until 1984, when R. Edward Freeman published the landmark book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, that the term “stakeholder” became associated with CSR and stakeholder theory was ultimately developed. It was Freeman (1984) who employed the stakeholder perspective to question the responsibilities of business and develop a framework of accountability to all interested parties, not just the shareholder.

Stakeholder theory focuses on the morals and values in managing a firm relative to its multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders are important not just to the implementation of company initiatives, but to achieving outcomes that are beneficial to the firm. To extend stakeholder theory, Freeman (1984) integrated corporate planning, systems theory, and CSR into a single approach. A theory such as this was seen as necessary due to a lack of management theories available to address the changes occurring in business environments during the 1980s (Freeman, 1984). Freeman (1984) divided the stakeholder into two strategic groups: *internal* and *external*. Internal stakeholders are owners, customers, employees, and suppliers; while external stakeholders are governments, competitors, consumer advocates, environmentalists, special interest groups, and the media. To encourage success in the implementation of CSR initiatives, managers need to be aware of all of these groups and how the actions of each can affect the firm and vice versa (Freeman, 1984). In developing CSR strategies, firms are prompted to take all stakeholders, both internal and external, into account.

Stakeholder theory is also used to address the sociological question of how society is affected by an organization and the actions of the individuals within that organization (Agle et al., 2008; Davis & Blomstrom, 1975; Laplume, Sonpar, & Litz, 2008). This question motivated Donaldson and Preston's (1995) explanation of the theory. The authors stressed the moral and ethical dimensions of CSR, seeking to make a case for firms to engage in such activity. The authors divided stakeholder theory into four distinct constructs: (1) *descriptive*, (2) *instrumental*, (3) *normative*, and (4) *managerial*. The descriptive construct utilizes research to make factual claims about what managers and companies actually do, often guided by a board of directors. The instrumental construct is research specific to managerial behaviors and outcomes. Outcomes are represented in yearly and quarterly financial disclosures, representing achievement of the firm's goals. The normative construct includes research indicating what managers should be doing, most often represented in the culture of a firm, as well as its vision and core value statements. Lastly, the managerial construct involves the needs of the firm to satisfy all stakeholders.

The concept of the stakeholder continues to be extended in CSR research. For example, Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) examined the stakeholder relationship with the firm through responsibility. The authors developed a model of stakeholder theory based on three attributes: (1) *power*, (2) *legitimacy*, and (3) *urgency*. Power explains the stakeholders' ability to influence the firm. Legitimacy is the stakeholders' relationship or level of involvement with the firm. Urgency is a call to action by the stakeholder due to either time sensitivity or the level of importance of the activity. It is each attribute, or a

combination of the three, which represents the stakeholder's responsibility to the firm. That is, each stakeholder should not be regarded as equal based on the responsibility attributes. As a result, one goal of this dissertation is to understand the various viewpoints of different employees as stakeholders, as each represents particular attributes or sets of attributes relative to the firm.

An empirical study published in 1999 by Berman, Wicks, Kotha, and Jones compared two distinctly different perspectives of the stakeholder model: *stakeholder strategic management* and *intrinsic stakeholder commitment*. On the one hand, the stakeholder strategic management model posits improved financial performance as the sole concern of stakeholders, and on the other, the intrinsic stakeholder commitment model positions the firm's moral commitment to stakeholders as the guiding component of financial success. The authors' analysis helps explain the stakeholder approach and its effects on financial performance (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Garriga & Melé, 2004; Lee, 2008).

While the application of stakeholder theory is an important advancement in CSR research, it nevertheless remains controversial (Laplume et al., 2008). It is a managerial theory, in that it directs managers on how they should operate (Freeman, Wicks, & Parmar, 2004), however, firm priorities can be influenced by special interests of managers who may be misguided about firm priorities (Laplume et al., 2008). Freeman's (1984) original intent with stakeholder theory was to offer a rational approach to strategy, utilizing the stakeholder as a filter to achieve superior firm performance. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1994) was proposed as an alternative to the stockholder-based

organizational theory of Milton Friedman (1962). The basis of Friedman's stockholder theory is to increase profit. In 1962, Friedman wrote, "There is one and only one social responsibility of business — to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it ... engages in open and free competition, without deception or fraud" (p. 133). Such views fuel the Friedman-Freeman-Stockholder-Stakeholder debate that continues today.

Within the past fifteen years, Freeman has worked to refine and improve upon stakeholder theory. Phillips, Freeman, and Wicks (2003) defend the use of stakeholder theory as a positive association for the stakeholder and the firm, not just an opportunistic approach on the part of management. On the other side of the debate, Sundaram and Inkpen (2004) have opposed stakeholder theory. Similar to Friedman's (1962) stockholder approach, the authors state that the only goal for managers should be maximizing shareholder value. Through the exploration of the employee's perspective as a stakeholder, this dissertation seeks to shed light on various perspectives relative to CSR, and specifically corporate philanthropy. In the next section, a discussion of literature on the topic of CSR in the U.S. apparel industry is provided.

### **CSR and the U.S. Apparel Industry**

McWilliams and Siegel (2001) consider CSR to be the point where a firm goes beyond its interests and necessary legal compliance, to act in ways that advance social good. Due to the size and scope of the apparel industry, apparel firms are often tasked with the responsibility of balancing CSR initiatives with a profit-driven business strategy. However, there is a lack of knowledge regarding the apparel industry and CSR (Gaskill-

Fox et al., 2014; Lee, Fairhurst, & Wesley, 2009; Mann, Byun, Kim, & Hoggie, 2013).

Like many firms engaged in CSR initiatives to address the needs of society (Davis & Blomstrom, 1975; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001) apparel firms are committing resources to find ways to define, implement, evaluate, and communicate CSR objectives (Dickson et al., 2009). Consequently, communication of apparel firm CSR has improved over the years (Mann et al., 2013). For example, following the Rana Plaza factory collapse of 2013, the United Nation's International Labor Organization (ILO) called for major apparel firms such as H&M and Gap Inc. to agree to stricter labor standards (ILO, 2015). It is these high-profile brands that face greater scrutiny and the urgent need to communicate transparency and CSR activities to various stakeholders (Mann et al., 2013).

Recently, U.S. apparel industry profits reached an all-time high, bringing in over \$250 million in sales and representing 10% of the labor force (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Due to its breadth and depth, the apparel industry impacts the U.S. economy and its workforce and therefore represents a significant stakeholder voice. Conversely, the global effects of the apparel industry have local effects at home in the U.S. (Laudal, 2010), with sourcing ethics as one example of a concern in the apparel industry (Graafland, 2002). For example, stemming from a consumer call for ethical products, Athleta, a subsidiary of Gap Inc., is a *Certified B Corporation* and sells Fair Trade Certified Apparel. Garments are produced in a factory certified by Fair Trade USA and factory workers directly earn an additional financial premium, which they collectively invest in their communities. Thus, some apparel firms are conforming to global pressures

to improve CSR practices. Although studies on CSR reference apparel companies such as Adidas (Frenkel & Scott, 2002), Gap Inc. (Amazeen, 2011; Ansett, 2007; Arrigo, 2013; Graafland, 2002), H&M (Graafland, 2002; Islam & Deegan, 2010), Levi-Strauss (Doorey, 2011; Graafland, 2002), Nike (DeTienne & Lewis, 2005; Doorey, 2011; Graafland, 2002; Islam & Deegan, 2010), and Reebok (Yu, 2008), the focus has been primarily on global supply chain and labor practices, with little consideration for the impact of strategies and goals on local individuals and communities.

In one example of a firm that communicated its responsible behavior through a focus on local impact, the British multinational apparel, home, and food product retailer Marks & Spencer introduced a CSR program called *Plan A* as part of its efforts to be known as the world's most sustainable retailer (Wilson, 2015). Marks & Spencer is the largest apparel retailer in the UK by volume. The following statement is included on its corporate website,

For 132 years our customers have trusted M&S to do things in a responsible way. The commitments we make through Plan A ensure that everything we do makes a positive difference, whether it's sourcing responsibly, conserving energy, reducing waste or supporting the communities we serve. In a world facing rapidly growing environmental and social challenges, we believe we can make a difference by leading the way on truly sustainable change.

Since its introduction in 2007, Marks & Spencer has achieved 57 of its total 104 CSR commitments, including *Spark Something Good*, a volunteer initiative between its stores and the communities they operate within. However, there is still room to grow, in that, according to the Global 100 Index, which ranks the world's top 100 most sustainable

companies, Marks & Spencer ranked #21 on the list (Corporate Knights, 2016). Other apparel firms on the list included Adidas (Germany) at #5 and H&M (Sweden) at #20. Interestingly, in 2018, only Kering (France) #47 and H&M #57 appeared on the list. Markedly absent from both lists are apparel firms based in the United States.

The research literature is similar, in that much of the focus is on global CSR practices. For example, Pedersen and Gwozdz (2014) investigated CSR in the Nordic fashion industry, specifically firm response to increased CSR social pressure. Their analysis revealed that, while stakeholders conform to CSR pressures, most viewed CSR as a compliance initiative versus a strategic opportunity. In an interpretive study of CSR practices in the apparel industry and its evolution over time (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014), philanthropy, labor practices, and environmental practices were the most common themes to emerge. Additional studies have analyzed global CSR initiatives, such as CSR in the Indian apparel industry (Gupta & Hodges, 2012) and the CSR potential of the international apparel industry (Laudal, 2010). Recently, Mann, et al. (2013) offered an assessment of CSR by U.S. apparel companies, however the focus was on CSR as related to environmental issues instead of people or social issues. Likewise, a longitudinal analysis (2001-2009) of how three apparel firms (Gap Inc., Levi Strauss, and Nike) communicate CSR on their websites highlighted changes in corporate CSR practices over time (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014), but did not offer explanation as to why or how changes have occurred. Although there are studies that exist on the U.S. apparel industry specifically, much remains to be examined. This dissertation fills some of the gaps and

sheds light on relatively unexplored concepts, such as stakeholder theory, relative to CSR initiatives of apparel firms.

Apparel firms are located across the globe, however, there is little research on how firms have developed CSR strategies to connect with the communities they operate within (Kim, Ha, & Fong, 2014). Firms are looking to move beyond serving the community from a business operations standpoint, to building community engagement and strengthening the sustainability of the local community (Kim et al., 2014; Pelozo et al., 2009). Although Kim et al. (2014) investigated the consumer perspective on CSR in local communities, little is known from the point of view of other stakeholder groups. Employees, as stakeholders, must be aware of CSR before they can contribute to the future development of CSR policies or implement CSR practices (Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006). Moreover, few studies have examined corporate philanthropy effects from the perspective of different stakeholder groups. In the next section, literature on corporate volunteerism as a type of CSR, and specifically as a form of corporate philanthropy, is discussed.

### **Corporate Volunteerism**

Corporate volunteerism has its roots in the United States and is a form of strategic management. Corporate volunteerism was first reported on by Cathleen Wild in a 1993 survey of 454 U.S. corporations in conjunction with the Points of Light Foundation. Wild's study demonstrated that volunteer programs are a conduit for corporations to become involved in the community, particularly by helping nonprofits. Nonprofit organizations are often established to better society, and typically seek to address



economic and social problems that are not addressed by government. As defined by the Internal Revenue Service (2016), nonprofit agencies are considered public charities, providing relief for the poor, distressed, or underprivileged. For-profit firms will often work together with nonprofits to supplement societal needs that are not addressed by government programs. For example, Dress for Success provides professional clothing for women seeking employment. While government aid may assist with food and healthcare, clothing as a basic need is often forgotten. Although nonprofits clearly recognize the importance of corporate volunteering, there is a void in academic literature on the topic as it pertains to CSR and corporate philanthropy. Taking this a step further, in the next section, the ways that employee volunteerism can help to meet the needs of the community are examined.

### **Employee Volunteer Programs**

Volunteering is a planned activity, involving a commitment of both time and energy, with the end result benefiting the public good (Penner, 2002; Wilson, 2000). An employee volunteer program (EVP) is an organized and planned effort wherein employees of a firm collectively serve the needs of the local community. According to one source, EVPs and projects that encourage employees to team with their peers are the most common forms of corporate philanthropy in the U.S. today (America's Charities, 2015).

Traditionally, the volunteer labor force includes individuals who are not employed, such as youth, women, or retired individuals, especially those with available free time (Wilson, 2000). EVPs are changing this landscape. An increasing number of

firms are developing EVPs to coordinate their employees' efforts to serve their communities and support social and environmental causes (Peloza & Hassay, 2006; Peloza et al., 2009). In the U.S., for example, as the percentage of the adult population who volunteer their time each year has remained relatively stable at 25% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), the extent of volunteering through EVPs has grown considerably more rapidly, with over 90% of Fortune 500 companies that are headquartered in the U.S. having established an active EVP (Boccalandro, 2009).

Despite the prevalence of EVPs, and the growing needs of the nonprofit sector, empirical assessment of EVPs is lacking (Benjamin, 2001; Booth, Park, & Glomb, 2009; Grant, 2012; Jones, 2010). The potential positive effects of EVPs are numerous, and studies suggest that employee volunteerism improves firm attractiveness and decreases turnover rates (Turban & Greening, 1997), while it increases job satisfaction (Peterson, 2004), improves performance and retention of highly qualified employees (Lee, Park, & Lee, 2013; Peterson, 2004), and provides greater value than simply making monetary donations to a nonprofit (Hess, Rogovsky, & Dunfee, 2002; Madden et al., 2006). Moreover, EVPs foster relationships between the volunteers and the nonprofit (Austin, 2000).

There are other benefits of EVPs. For example, Peloza and Hassay (2006) suggest that employees increase their support for a nonprofit due to exposure to the charity through an EVP, as well as other CSR initiatives. There is also indication that volunteering time spent outside of work is linked to improved employee job performance (Rodell, 2013), and that employees who volunteer through their employer's EVPs report

higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment (Peterson, 2004), thereby increasing retention (Booth et al., 2009; Flammer & Luo, 2016). Career-related benefits and a break from the monotony of work are often reasons for participation in EVPs (Peloza et al., 2009). Additional benefits from participation in an EVP include being motivated by the ability to spend more time with friends and the chance to meet new people (Wilson, 2000). Consequently, one study suggests that 82% of employees want the opportunity to volunteer with peers in an EVP setting (America's Charities, 2015). Thus, employees are an important resource, as firms strategically use EVPs as a component of CSR strategy.

### **Employees as Stakeholders**

A primary goal of this dissertation is to understand the employee perspective of CSR initiatives, and specifically volunteer programs that are used as a type of corporate philanthropy. Employees create demand for CSR (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) and, in turn, CSR creates value for various stakeholders (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009; Hejjas, et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013; Peloza & Shang, 2011; Taghian, D'Souza, & Polonsky, 2014). While a demand for CSR activities exists among stakeholders (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) the results vary based on industry and firm.

It appears that employees actively involved in CSR activities recognize the social return for the nonprofit, as well as the social and economic benefits for the firm (Slack, Corlett, & Morris, 2015). Indeed, firms depend on employee responsiveness to deliver effective CSR initiatives (Collier & Esteban, 2007). To motivate employees to engage in CSR initiatives, incentives are often offered. For example, Gap Inc. and Macy's both provide incentives to employees, encouraging their engagement in various CSR

initiatives (i.e., paid time-off from work or monetary donations to nonprofits). However, not all employees engage in CSR activities, signaling a need to better understand their motivations and expectations (Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008).

Very few studies exist that examine the individual or micro-level of CSR. Indeed, there were only eight articles, published from 1970-2011, that include an analysis of the outcomes of CSR at the individual stakeholder level (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). There is a need to better understand how CSR initiatives are perceived, particularly as a means of attracting prospective employees (Greening & Turban, 2000; Turban & Greening, 1997), as well as to achieve organizational citizenship (Jones, 2010; Lin, Lyau, Tsai, Chen, & Chiu, 2010; Sully de Luque, Washburn, Waldman, & House, 2008). CSR can also increase employee commitment (Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999), improve employee relations (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999; Glavas & Piderit, 2009), improve employee performance (Lee et al., 2013), and increase employee retention (Jones, 2010) and engagement (Booth et al., 2009; Glavas & Piderit, 2009). Because CSR initiatives are executed at the individual or micro-level through strategy and decision-making by managers (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012), there is a need to link CSR outcomes with the individuals integral to a firm, including employees at all levels.

Thus far, few studies have focused on internal stakeholder reactions to CSR activities (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Lee et al., 2013), therefore little is known as to how employees respond to CSR-related business practices of their firms (Jones, 2010). This knowledge is important, because as Wilson (2015) wrote, “corporations, alone, cannot resolve the sustainability challenges facing the world and therefore there is a need for

social partners or stakeholders to be involved too” (p. 436). Only recently has research been employed to investigate the individual or micro-level perspective of CSR, including how employees respond to CSR initiatives (De Roeck & Maon, 2016).

As firms seek to gain a competitive advantage, it has been argued that employees are the most valuable asset of a firm (Barney, 1991; Flammer & Luo, 2016). To this end, CSR can be utilized as an engagement tool among employees, improving employee engagement, job success, and reducing turnover (Booth et al., 2009; Flammer & Luo, 2016; Lee et al., 2013). Moreover, according to Flammer and Luo (2016), “broader CSR programs may further enhance employees’ motivation — for example, employees may be more engaged when they feel that their employer is a ‘good citizen’ along multiple dimensions” (p. 175-6). EVPs is a topic that needs to be explored more thoroughly due to the positive influence these activities may have on both the employee and the firm.

In summary, EVPs collectively serve the needs of society as firms are looking to move beyond traditional business operations to build engagement and strengthen the local community (Kim et al., 2014; Peloza et al., 2009). Although this form of CSR as corporate philanthropy continues to grow, academic research has not followed suit. To this end, in this dissertation, the employee perspective on CSR in the apparel industry, and specifically EVPs as a form of CSR via corporate philanthropy, is examined.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Exploring CSR through the lens of corporate philanthropy, and specifically EVPs, offers a dimension that is ultimately lacking in the literature. Although as a concept, CSR has been extensively researched and continues to gain momentum among firms (Fatma &

Rahman, 2015; Margolis & Walsh, 2003), there are aspects of the topic, such as corporate philanthropy and the individual stakeholder, which have not been thoroughly investigated. Carroll and Shabana (2010) stated that the business case for CSR is solidified through the documentation of its positive economic impact on financial performance. However, not all CSR initiatives, such as volunteerism, can be measured in terms of dollars, thereby pointing to the need to better understand the social impact of CSR achieved through EVPs (Halme & Laurila, 2009; Kim et al., 2013).

In this dissertation, the social capital accrued through EVPs as explained by social exchange theory (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans, 1961) and equity theory (Adams, 1963) is examined. Together, the theories offer an explanation for participation in EVPs and the outcomes achieved by the relationship. Additionally, using social capital to investigate EVPs allows for further study of the stakeholder relationships between the firm, its employees, and the community. In the following section, social capital, social exchange theory, and equity theory are each discussed in turn.

### **Social Capital**

Dating back to the early twentieth century, *social capital* evokes the importance of community involvement in societal success (Hanifan, 1916). To understand social capital and how it leads to the betterment of society, one must understand its theoretical underpinnings. Different frameworks have been developed to examine social capital, with considerable disagreement and even contradiction in the various definitions established (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The following discussion begins with a dissection of the three

perspectives which form the foundation of social capital: the first led by Bourdieu (1986), the second by Coleman (1988), and the third by Putnam (1993).

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was one of the first researchers to extend the idea of capital. In the sociological essay, *The Forms of Capital*, Pierre Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes between the three types of capital: *economic*, *cultural*, and *social*. Bourdieu defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 248). He focused on the role played by different forms of capital in the reproduction of unequal power relations, using it to define inequalities that exist in society. However, Bourdieu utilized the theory to explain the maintenance of social inequalities between the upper, middle, and lower class, instead of as a means to improve the social capital of individuals.

Subsequently, sociologist James Coleman (1988) viewed social capital as a resource utilized for action occurring when individuals interact and develop relationships with each other. This interaction develops either consciously or emerges as a by-product of other social activities (Coleman, 1988). Coleman (1990) defined social capital by its function, stating that it "facilitate[s] certain action of individuals who are within the structure" (p. 302). The structure is society as a whole. According to Coleman (1988), there are three forms of social capital: (1) obligations and expectations which depend on the trustworthiness of the social environment, (2) the capacity of information to flow through the social structure in order to provide a basis for action, and (3) the presence of norms. Coleman's approach was broader than Bourdieu's, in that he saw social capital as

improving social inequalities for all individuals in society, not just for maintaining elite or upper-class status through social associations.

To build upon the social capital framework, Robert Putnam, a political scientist and public policy professor, theorized that social networks have value, particularly in democratic societies, as a result of increased civic engagement. Putnam (1993) believed that social capital stems from the networks, norms, and trust that develop within a group, and provides the motivation to pursue the objectives shared among all members belonging to that group. Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects, and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections, or networks of relationships, among individuals. It is Putnam's (1993) seminal research on civic participation and institutional performance that strongly influences the theoretical framework of social capital employed in this dissertation.

While both Coleman and Bourdieu saw social capital as an attribute of an individual, Putnam (1993) regarded it as an attribute of a community. Putnam developed an argument for social capital in his 1995 essay entitled *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*. In it he argues that social capital is accumulated in human relationships, and, therefore, it relates to interactions within and between groups. Interactions can be any form of socialization, ranging from sports leagues, to book clubs, to planned United Way events, to coffee with friends. It is these particular interactions that lead to the establishment of social norms and networks, which, in turn, facilitate cooperation and collective action (Putnam, 1995). Consequently, communities with



strong social capital experience less crime, offer better education, and experience stronger economic growth.

Putnam delineated two kinds of social capital: *bonding* and *bridging*. Bonding social capital refers to relations within similar groups, such as families, and social or ethnic groups. Bonding is the form of social capital Bourdieu (1986) refers to in his definition. Bridging social capital refers to relations between different groups and encompasses individuals across diverse social and economic groups. According to Putnam, bridging social capital is necessary in order to address the societal problems of today. Collectively, Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam all point to the importance of social networks and the beneficial outcomes which may occur through the various interactions of individuals or groups.

The measurable effects of social capital continue to be debated and discussed. According to Putman (2000), social capital has “forceful, even quantifiable effects on many aspects of our lives” and it is more than just “warm, cuddly feelings or frissons of community pride” (p. 23). The quantifiable effects may include decreased crime, improved education, and increased quality of life. However, according to Adler and Kwon (2002) social capital is the “the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actors’ relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence and solidarity it makes available to the actor” (p. 23). That is, individuals and groups must have a reason or motivation to provide resources or goodwill to others. Consequently, social capital encompasses the ability to spread information, strengthen trust between stakeholders, build reputations within the community, and

activate resources by supporting nonprofits through philanthropic efforts. Social capital is accrued through equity. It is achieved through the fair and just treatment of communities by firms, and in turn, benefits multiple stakeholders, including employees and community members.

For the purposes of this dissertation, social capital refers to the collective value embedded in all social networks enabling individuals to work together for the betterment of society (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993). According to Coleman (1990),

Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. (p. 302)

CSR is the basis for all responsible action initiated by firms. Corporate philanthropy acts as a form of service, meeting the needs of society, and the EVP acts as a catalyst of business, solving a societal problem with social capital being the end result. That is, EVPs act as conduits of action, improving the communities in which firms operate, therefore social capital is the outcome of EVPs. It is not one EVP event, but the totality of multiple events that creates value for a community, and more broadly, for society as a whole. Social structure is defined by the stakeholder relationship between firms, owners, employees, and community members. Stakeholders include employees of firms and the members of a community, and it is these individuals who therefore possess the ability to provide social capital to others and to the community as a whole.

## Equity Theory

At its core, *equity theory* explains why humans strive for fairness and justice. First introduced more than 50 years ago (Adams, 1963; Homans, 1961) equity theory has developed into an important concept in organizational behavior, marketing, and policy literature. It has become a dominant justice theory examining workplace behavior through social exchange and fairness within organizations (Kabanoff, 1991). The theory continues to be used to examine fairness in the workplace, as well as explain the balance achieved among business, government, and society (Heilbroner, 1990).

Developed by behavioral psychologist, J. Stacy Adams (1963), equity theory helps to explain employee motivation. Motivation stems from attempts to address unfairness, or “inequity” in relationships with others. Individual perceptions of fairness occur in various relationships, whether between individuals, groups, or organizations. Relative to organizational commitment, individuals possess a subjective point of view based on personal experience (Hosmer & Kiewitz, 2005).

Equity theory posits that within organizations, norms of reciprocity develop between individuals; norms which address fairness and equality (Rousseau, 1989). Similar norms are also responsible for impacting an employee’s decision-making process. Individuals determine the equity or fairness of their relationships or exchanges with others by assessing the ratio of what they receive from the exchange (outcomes) relative to what they bring into the exchange (inputs). To better understand equity, in this dissertation, a goal is to understand employee perception of EVPs. Thus, employees were asked, *Was this [the EVP] a productive use of your time? Why or why not?* Answers

helped determine employee perceptions of the outcome of the EVP relative to their individual time and effort.

Equity theory contends that employees are not concerned with the final composition of an outcome, but motivated by a pursuit of fairness to all and therefore are more concerned with how fair they perceive the outcomes to be (Hofmans, 2012). Today, individuals are seeking employers that are socially responsible, and CSR offers a means to provide fairness to society through various initiatives. In this dissertation, employee and community stakeholder perceptions as to whether an apparel firm is meeting the needs of the community are explored. Because fairness is subjective, addressing multiple stakeholders (i.e., employees and community members) allows for various perceptions to be revealed.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Equity theory explains the need for fairness and justice, however, the need to better understand the outcome of EVPs and the reciprocal relationship that develops between the employee and the community, and the community and the firm, remains. *Social exchange* is a give-and-take relationship. It is the foundation of organizational citizenship, wherein employees voluntarily help their employers or other employees (Lambert, 2000). Much of the early work on organizational justice draws on social exchange theory (Blau 1964), which is built on the principles of reciprocity and social obligation (Gouldner 1960). Through EVPs, employees donate time and talent and the community benefits. In the case of the present study, it is assumed that the community

will thrive from the relationship formed with the firm, thanks to the employee and his or her willingness to participate in an EVP as a form of CSR.

According to the literature on CSR, firms have economic, environmental, and social obligations. It is through these three tenets of business obligations that CSR evolves into the responsibility of business to “do good.” Thus, social exchange involves interactions that help the firm to meet obligations of business to society (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) argued that social exchange theory “is among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior” (p. 874), as it is through social exchange that employees make sense of and navigate relationship-building within the workplace.

Social exchange theory delineates two forms of exchange within an organization: *economic* and *social* (Blau, 1964). Blau (1964) was among the first to distinguish between exchanges where the nature of the obligation is specific and purely economic, and those that are less economic and more social or emotional. CSR involves the economic responsibility of business to produce goods and services that consumers need and want. CSR also involves the social obligations of business, encompassing actions of a firm that are in response to society's expectations of good corporate citizenship. Economic exchange is measurable and profit-driven, while social exchanges are not always quantifiable. EVPs represent a social relationship between various stakeholders of a firm (employees and the community) that provides a social exchange. This exchange is based on mutual trust and the expectation that the benefits of it will be shared (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Reciprocity is a basic tenet of social exchange theory, existing when there is a direct exchange of resources between two individuals, and therefore, a give-and-take relationship. The exchange may be economic, social, or a combination of the two, all resulting in a shared benefit. That is, if one person supplies a benefit, the receiving party should respond in kind (Gergen 1969). Corporate philanthropy by firms can involve donating money, goods, or services, as well as donations of time through volunteerism. Volunteerism provides benefits to a community, and in turn, the community flourishes through improved education, beautification of parks, or enhancing public goods and services. EVPs are a form of corporate philanthropy, with firms providing the resource of employees, employees providing their time and talent, and communities benefitting through improved public services as a result.

For the purposes of this study, volunteer efforts are considered to be a form of exchange. The exchange provided through corporate philanthropy may not be just economic goods, but may also include the distribution of goods and services that effect well-being, whether psychological, physiological, economic, or social (Kabanoff, 1991). For example, in a study examining the role of nonprofit thrift shops in helping community members develop a professional identity (Konya & Hodges, 2016), I found that through the efforts of volunteers associated with the nonprofit, multiple benefits were achieved. The nonprofit offered the basic need of clothing. However, more importantly, the network of relationships formed between community members and volunteers provided confidence to those individuals seeking to improve their lives (Konya & Hodges, 2016). That is, social exchange relationships are often associated with non-

tangible assets (i.e., confidence), wherein a precise dollar value cannot be determined. Thus, social exchange has been used by researchers to examine the wide variety of types of charitable contributions that exist (Wilson, 2000).

### **Integration of Key Concepts**

The conceptual framework used for this dissertation integrates the three main areas of literature and thought discussed in the previous sections: *social capital*, *equity*, and *social exchange*. In this section, I begin with a discussion of how the integration of concepts forms the framework that facilitates the study of U.S. apparel firm CSR, and specifically EVPs as a form of corporate philanthropy. This is followed by a discussion of how several guiding questions that arise from the framework are used to address the purpose and objectives of the study.

### **Linking CSR, Corporate Philanthropy, and Volunteerism**

Exploring CSR through the lens of corporate philanthropy, and specifically EVPs, offers a dimension that is ultimately lacking in the literature. CSR forms the base and is the guiding principal for all socially responsible actions by apparel firms. Carroll and Shabana (2010) stated that the business case for CSR is solidified through the documentation of a positive economic impact on financial performance. Although as a concept, CSR has been extensively researched and continues to gain momentum as a strategy among firms (Fatma & Rahman, 2015; Margolis & Walsh, 2003), there are aspects of the topic, such as corporate philanthropy and the individual stakeholder that have not been investigated.

Corporate philanthropy is a subset of CSR, representing the ethical and discretionary responsibilities of all firms (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991). Porter and Kramer (2002) argued that firms which actively engage in philanthropy not only create economic impacts but also social impacts, “True strategic giving...addresses important social and economic goals simultaneously, targeting areas of competitive context where the company and society both benefit because the firm brings unique assets and expertise” (p. 58). In turn, reciprocity occurs through the shared benefits that philanthropy offers the community, and in return, the firm.

When a firm focuses its efforts on a limited number of causes and directs its resources toward targeted efforts, it is more likely to create both economic and social impacts through philanthropy (Porter & Kramer, 2002). However, not all forms of corporate philanthropy, such as volunteerism, can be measured in terms of dollars, pointing to the need to better understand the social impact of such efforts (Halme & Laurila, 2009; Kim et al., 2013). Employees are a key stakeholder group (Donaldson & Preston 1995; Freeman 1984; Matten & Crane 2005), especially in terms of implementing CSR initiatives and policies of a firm, therefore employee volunteerism can be a useful strategy for increasing the effectiveness of corporate philanthropy (Peloza et al., 2009). In relation to other forms of corporate philanthropy, volunteerism involves a concerted effort within the community versus just monetary donations (Peloza et al., 2009).

As highlighted Figure 2, the basis of the conceptual framework is CSR. CSR is the foundation and guiding principal for all socially responsible actions engaged in by



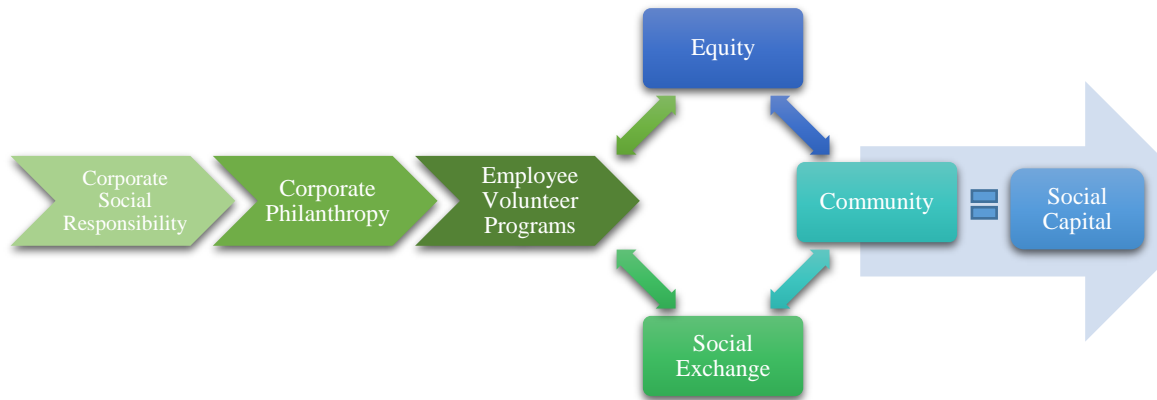
firms. Corporate philanthropy is a subset of CSR, representing the ethical and discretionary responsibilities of all firms (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991). Volunteerism is an activity associated with corporate philanthropy and represented by EVPs. As previously mentioned, this study focuses specifically on apparel firms due to a gap in empirical research relative to this particular industry.



*Figure 2. CSR as the Foundation for EVPs*

As depicted in Figure 3 (below), the conceptual framework developed for the dissertation is rooted in the three concepts of CSR, corporate philanthropy, and volunteerism. To understand how EVPs can help a firm achieve its CSR and corporate philanthropy goals, the conceptual framework integrates equity and social exchange as a means of creating social capital. As illustrated in the figure, EVPs are initiated to address a societal problem and employees are motivated to participate in EVPs because they represent a fair and equitable social exchange between a firm and the community in which it operates. Based on the reciprocity of social exchange, employees give to the community in order to receive something back. Benefits of volunteerism may include improved education of youth, stronger support for families in need, and the beautification of public spaces. Consequently, the community receives the benefits from EVPs. As a

result, equity, or fair and just treatment from firms benefits multiple stakeholders (employees and community members), and social capital is accrued.



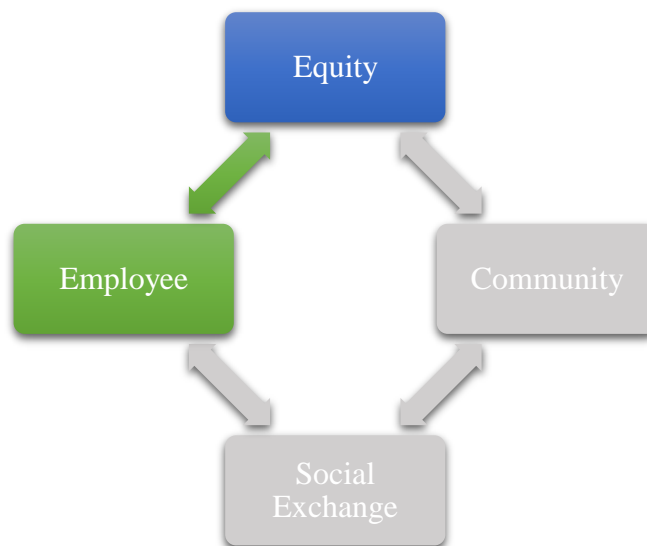
*Figure 3. Social Capital as an Outcome of CSR*

Figure 3 depicts the ways the constructs work together. Employee volunteerism can be a useful strategy for increasing the effectiveness of corporate philanthropy (Peloza et al., 2009). That is, firms offer employees “participation in such activities as an obligation towards the community members who trust them, and an opportunity to show how the business shares the social values” (Sen & Cowley, 2013, p. 422). In a firm, managers act as instrumental stakeholders by implementing CSR strategies (Davis, 1973). However, firms depend on employee responsiveness to deliver effective CSR initiatives (Collier & Esteban, 2007). According to Mason and Simmons (2014), stakeholders recognize different perceptions of CSR and the equity it provides. Volunteerism and EVPs provide benefits (or rewards) to stakeholders in the form of enhancing communities, improved schools, and supporting families in need. In this dissertation, the value of EVPs to both the employees of apparel firms and various

community members associated with EVPs is examined. Social capital is accrued through the relationship that is formed among multiple stakeholders during volunteer initiatives. Thus, the viewpoint of the stakeholders involved in community-driven CSR initiatives adds to the literature relative to the topic. The next sections offer explanation of the different aspects of the conceptual framework.

### **Equity to Employee**

As depicted in the upper left-hand section of Figure 4 (below), equity helps to explain the motivation for employees to participate in an EVP. Employees are motivated by what is perceived to be equitable and fair, in this case, the shared social values of a community. That is, volunteerism helps communities, and in turn, provides rewards to employees participating in EVPs.



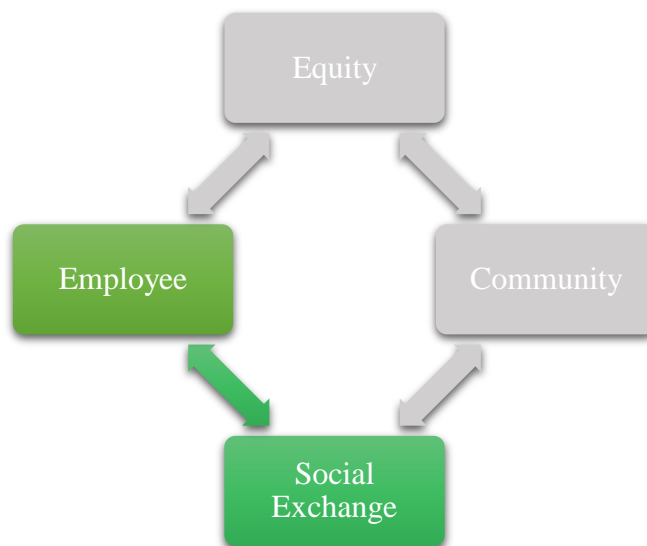
*Figure 4. Equity and the Employee*

Early equity theory research focused on perceptions of fairness in employee-employer relationships. However, any type of exchange relationship can be perceived as fair or unfair (Adams, 1965), thereby extending the theory to multiple stakeholder relationships, whether internal or external. In this dissertation, I investigate the value of the relationship with the employee as an internal stakeholder, and the community as an external stakeholder. Much like the ways that CSR is grounded in the interwoven relationship of the 3Ps (people, planet, and profit), equity theory emphasizes the critical balance among society, government, and business. Thus, in the present study, EVPs are seen as the business entity created to meet the needs of society that are not met by government.

Equity theory is the most widely studied theory of fairness (Greenberg, 1990), likely because it is both a motivational theory that explains why, and a cognitive theory that focuses on perception. In this dissertation, the perception of EVPs is that it helps the community by providing balance between the tenets of the 3Ps, thereby explaining the motivation for employee participation in volunteer activities. According to employees of apparel firms, business has an obligation to give back to society (Konya & Hodges, 2017). Thus, corporate philanthropy is a form of equity or fairness, with employees of a firm “giving back” to society. Applying equity theory to the topic of this dissertation broadens the understanding of the reward or benefit employees receive through participation in such events.

### Employee to Social Exchange

As depicted in the lower left-hand section of Figure 5 (below), EVPs are a give-and-take relationship between the firm, its employees, and the community. That is, the employee of a firm gives time, and in return, receives something of value. For example, in a study on CSR in Australian firms, the most common motivation for employee participation in an EVP was to build relationships and networks within the community, improve business image, and increase personal satisfaction (Sen & Cowley, 2013).



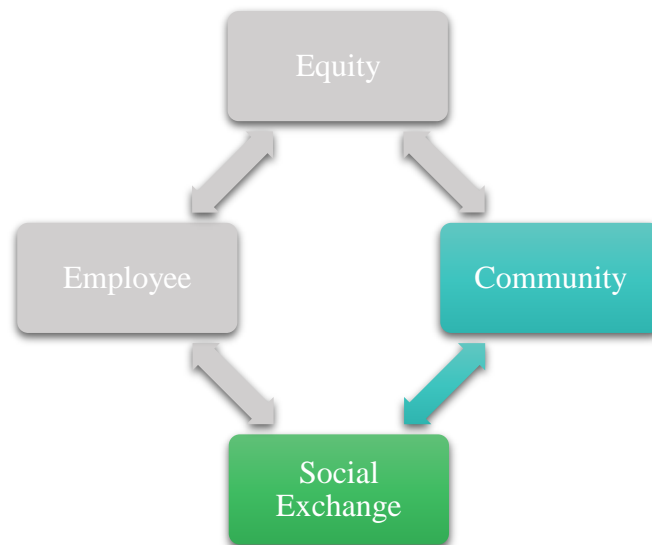
*Figure 5. The Employee and Social Exchange*

According to Saks (2000), social exchange theory provides a strong theoretical rationale for explaining employee engagement in a firm's discretionary activities such as EVPs. When employees perceive their relationship with their employer to be fair and just, they will reciprocate in kind, such as with positive behaviors (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960). In this dissertation, social exchange is used to explain employee perception, in that

employees who perceive their employer as fair and just will, in turn, recognize the firm's good citizenship and reciprocate by participating in EVPs as a CSR strategy.

### **Social Exchange to Community**

The reciprocal relationship between the firm, its employees, and the community is also present in the link between social exchange theory and the community as external stakeholder (depicted in the lower right-hand section in Figure 6 below). Through volunteerism, employees give time and talent to the community. In turn, the community reciprocates with increased economic and social value, resulting in social capital.



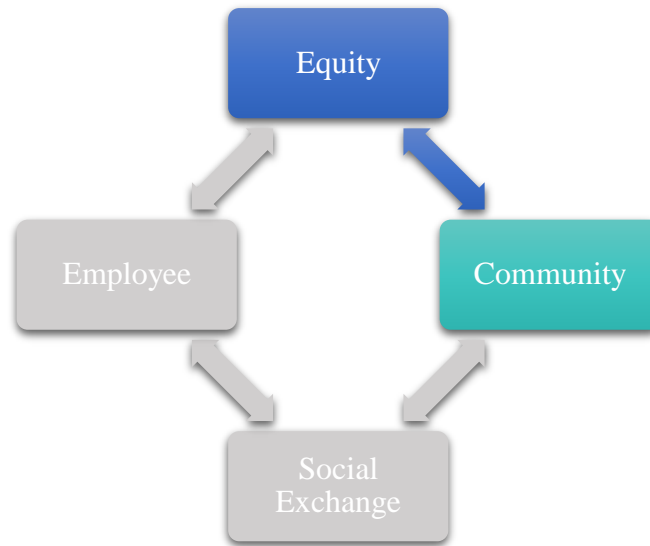
*Figure 6. Social Exchange and the Community*

An employee's organizational commitment is dependent upon his or her perception of the value and fairness of the organization's actions as part of a relationship (Collier & Esteban 2007), or as Slack et al. (2015) posited, the "implicit social contract between an organization and its employees" (p. 537). The rule of reciprocity applies to

CSR initiatives because it involves voluntary actions by a firm to support the well-being of employees as well as other stakeholders. In turn, corporate philanthropy as a subset of CSR provides a framework for the voluntary participation of employees in CSR related initiatives. If a firm is “doing good,” employees may feel obliged to reciprocate and participate in CSR initiatives that help the community. Thus, through EVPs, the community can benefit from the goodwill offered by employees of a firm. In return, investments in the community serve to increase social capital shared among multiple stakeholders.

### **Community to Equity**

As shown in the upper right-hand section in Figure 7 (below), equity is what communities seek when partnering with firms. That is, the community is seeking support from the firm that operates within it. Resources, returns, rewards, or compensation are also important to the exchange relationship. Adams (1965) called this “outcomes.” In the most general sense, outcomes can be conceived of as any consequences from the participation in a relationship. In this dissertation, equity helps to explain the relationship formed during the EVP between employees of the firm (internal stakeholders) and community members (external stakeholders).



*Figure 7. The Community and Equity*

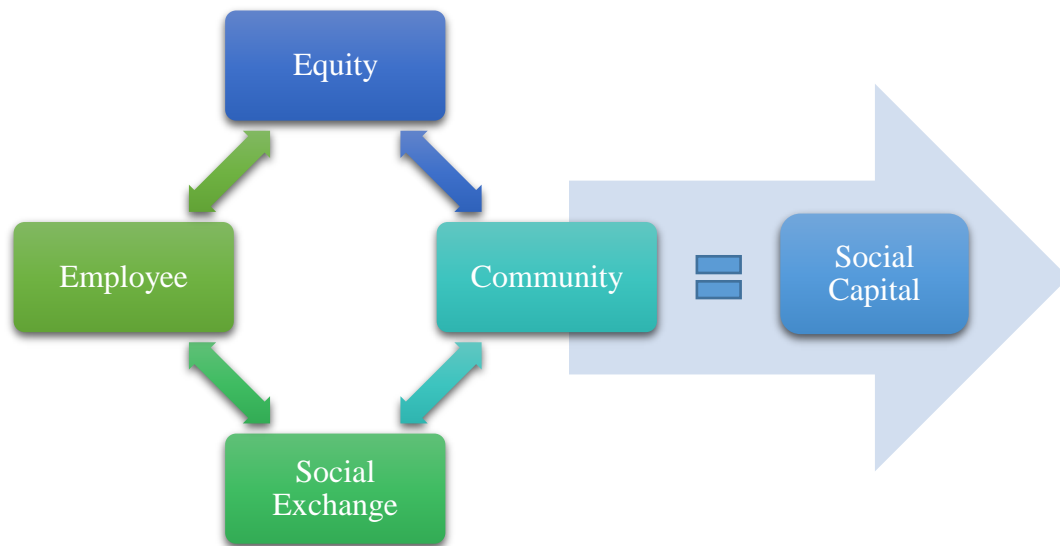
Equity is explained by inputs and outcomes, with the end goal being fairness achieved by multiple stakeholders. Inputs between individuals in an exchange relationship are not always the same. Any input an individual deems relevant becomes an important factor in his or her perception of the equity or inequity in a relationship. Examples of inputs may include time and effort. That is, the employee of an apparel firm and the community will each provide something different through participation in an EVP, however, it is anticipated that outcomes will be beneficial to each, such as improved education through tutoring or mentoring. Thus, it is important to understand the reciprocal relationship that forms between the firm and the community through the employee, along with the role of the community in corporate philanthropy.

### **Accruing Social Capital**

As seen in Figure 8 (below), the ultimate outcome of the concepts of the conceptual framework is social capital. In the case of this dissertation, accruing social



capital through EVPs is explained by social exchange theory (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans, 1961) and equity theory (Adams 1963). Together, the theories offer an explanation for participation in EVPs and the outcomes achieved. Actively engaging stakeholders contributes to social capital through improved market and social relations (Adler & Kwon 2002). Through improved market and social relations, firms and communities build bonds and form social capital.



*Figure 8. Accruing Social Capital*

### **Guiding Research Questions**

Understanding CSR, and particularly corporate philanthropy, from the stakeholder's perspective sheds light on the value that EVPs provide a firm, its employees, and the community. The twofold purpose of this study is: (1) to explore employee volunteer programs (EVPs) as CSR among apparel firms, and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the

communities it serves. As stated earlier in this chapter, four objectives were used to frame the investigation: (1) to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry, (2) to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy, (3) to examine the employee perspective on EVPs as stakeholders, and (4) to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community. The following section articulates the key research questions related to each objective used to guide this study.

#### *Corporate Philanthropy as a Form of CSR*

The first objective of this dissertation is to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR and specifically in the apparel industry. It is important to understand how corporate philanthropy can be utilized as a CSR strategy. However, as the literature suggests, the social impact of philanthropy is difficult to measure (Halme & Laurila, 2009). Consequently, it is important to understand it from the perspective of those engaged in it. Thus, the first guiding research question is: *How is corporate philanthropy, as a form of CSR, viewed by stakeholders (employees and community members)?* To this end, data collection focused on how employees of apparel firms, as internal stakeholders, and community members, as external stakeholders, perceive CSR initiatives such as corporate philanthropy.

#### *EVPs as a Type of Corporate Philanthropy*

The second objective of this dissertation is to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy. The literature defines corporate volunteering as a deliberately planned activity with the end result benefiting society (Penner, 2002; Wilson, 2000).

Employees are an important factor in the implementation of corporate philanthropic programs (Flammer & Luo, 2016), accordingly, it is important to understand the motivations behind their participation in EVPs. While research has explored the effects of volunteerism on employment, there remains a need to understand the motivation for participation among multiple stakeholders (internal and external) and the outcomes derived from the relationship formed through EVPs. Thus, the second guiding research question is designed to investigate why firms, employees, and community members develop corporate philanthropic partnerships in the form of EVPs: *What is the stakeholder's motivation to participate in the EVP?* To this end, through the process of data collection, internal and external stakeholders were asked why they participated in EVPs and to discuss the relationship between them that may have been established.

#### *What EVPs Mean to Stakeholders*

The third and fourth objectives of this dissertation are to examine the employee's perspective on EVPs and to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community. It is hoped that through the efforts of EVPs, firms and stakeholders will benefit by building social capital. That is, through EVPs individuals work together for the betterment of society (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993). Thus, it is important to understand what EVP outcomes mean to multiple stakeholders. The third guiding research question allows the outcomes to be explored through various perspectives: *In what ways do EVPs as a form of corporate philanthropy, benefit the firm? The employee? The community?* To address this guiding research question, the data collection methods allowed for the consideration of the

experiences of multiple stakeholders (internal and external) associated with EVP initiatives organized around the objectives guiding this study. In sum, this study offers an in-depth look at the value of such initiatives for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the community it serves.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, an overview of the literature relevant to the focus of this dissertation was provided. Specifically, research on CSR in the apparel industry, corporate philanthropy, and volunteering were discussed, along with applicable theoretical approaches. Gaps within the literature were highlighted relative to the goals and objectives of the dissertation. The conceptual framework that guides the study was outlined. In the next chapter, the methodological framework and methods that were used to collect data are explained.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

The twofold purpose of this study is: (1) to explore employee volunteer programs (EVPs) as CSR among apparel firms, and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the communities it serves. As discussed in Chapter I, a qualitative research design was employed to address the objectives of this study, which were: (1) to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry, (2) to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy, (3) to examine the employee perspective on EVPs as stakeholders, and (4) to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community.

A qualitative approach to research is both a social and a personal act, merging the study of a phenomenon with the experiences of the researcher (Van Maanen, 1982). As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state, "qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (p. 8). Yet, it is also important to understand the *why* of the phenomenon. According to Merriam (2009), "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Hence, it is important to gain an understanding of what something means for people who

live it every day, and the implementation of certain research techniques, specifically qualitative methods, can help to achieve that.

According to Van Maanen (1979), qualitative research is “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (p. 520). In the case of this dissertation, a qualitative approach is best suited because it allows for an in-depth investigation of the topic from the perspective of the individuals who are directly involved in the development and implementation of corporate philanthropic acts, specifically EVPs, along with the nonprofits and community members affected by such acts.

To present the methodological explanation in full, this chapter provides an overview of the research design, and begins with discussion of the ethnographic approach to research. Then, an overview of the multiple methods that were used to collect data is provided, along with a discussion of the participant sample. A discussion of the approach used in the analysis and interpretation concludes the chapter.

### **The Ethnographic Approach**

Ethnography is a commonly used qualitative approach in the social sciences and was used to address the purpose and objectives of this dissertation. *Ethnography* is the combination of two Greek words: *graphein*, the verb for “to write,” and *ethnoi*, a plural noun for “the nations-the others” (Erickson, 2011, p. 45). Combined, ethnography is the

process of writing about others. However, one must apply multiple methods to achieve this primary objective (Witkowski & Jones, 2006). As described by Van Maanen (1982),

Ethnography is a term used to cover a wide array of very different research adventures in the social world. As a method, it involves extensive fieldwork of various types including participant observation, formal and informal interviewing, document collecting, filming, recording, and so on. (p. 103)

It is through these multiple methods of data collection that social experiences are created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and the “writing of others” can occur.

First and foremost, ethnography is defined by fieldwork. The roots of ethnography are based in the discipline of anthropology. Sometimes referred to as *naturalistic inquiry*, in its original sense, fieldwork is the study of individuals in their natural environments (Sluka & Robben, 2007). Ethnography allows researchers the opportunity to interact with and observe participants within their natural environments, permitting the collection of thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) that illuminate human society and culture. Culture is, “essentially...the beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior patterns of a specific group of people” (Merriam, 2009, p. 27). That is, through the study of culture, ethnography is used to examine how attitudes and behaviors evolve over time, thereby shaping society (Merriam, 1998; Sluka & Robben, 2007).

Fieldwork is an emergent task, aimed at discovery and understanding (Van Maanen, 1982). Through fieldwork the researcher is able to study human interaction and to see emotions and reactions within the context of an individual situation. Thus, it is

imperative that the researcher be involved in the investigative process, which is accomplished by participation within the field (Sluka & Robben, 2007). At the same time, the researcher must remain neutral to the situation, applying an objective lens to the study (Van Maanen, 1982). Moreover, to fully comprehend the scope of the phenomenon under study, gaining trust from those being observed is essential to the ethnographic experience (Van Maanen, 1982). Trust provides a more accurate and objective recording of the interactions being observed, helping to further articulate the experiences of the participant.

Last, ethnographic techniques are most appropriate when studying dynamics within groups or organizations within a society (Van Maanen, 1982). That is, ethnography allows for the study of interaction between different individuals and groups, thereby achieving a holistic vantage point from which to examine the phenomenon. As stated by O'Reilly (2009), "ethnography consists of talking and listening and asking questions as much as it does participating and observing" (p. 125). Through the application of multiple data collection methods such as observation, visual documentation, and interviews, ethnography is an appropriate qualitative approach for this study. That is, the objectives of this dissertation were achieved by investigating CSR through the perceptions and experiences of employees engaged in corporate philanthropy initiatives, specifically EVPs, and by investigating the impact of these initiatives on the community.



## **Data Collection Methods**

A total of four U.S. based apparel brands were the focus of the data collection process. As discussed in Chapter I, data were collected via fieldwork, including observation, visual documentation, and field interviews. In addition, for a more in-depth perspective, more formal, in-depth interviews were also conducted. The following sections detail each data collection method in turn.

### **Observation and Fieldwork**

Ethnography is an iterative and inductive process (O'Reilly, 2009) and most effectively achieved through fieldwork, i.e., the process of observing behavior in a natural setting and recording such observations in the form of field notes (Merriam, 1998). Fieldwork is a core ethnographic approach for collecting data, as it allows the researcher to observe and examine aspects of human behavior that comprise society and culture (Merriam, 2009).

The primary method for data collection in the field is observation. Through observation, “researchers learn about the lives of the people they are interested in through first-hand experience in their daily lives” (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 150). In observation, the researcher can assume one of several stances while collecting data, ranging from full participant, to participant as observer, to observer as participant, to complete observer (Merriam, 1998). According to O'Reilly (2009), “Participant observation is the main method of ethnography and involves taking part as a member of a community while making mental and then written, theoretically informed observations.” (p. 150). Simply stated, in the field the participant observer becomes a member of the group, gaining

access to discussions and sharing in experiences, with the sole purpose being to record and then make sense of events and actions.

For observation to be successful, the researcher must first gain entry into the field (Goffman, 2002; Merriam, 1998). That is, the researcher must be accepted by those being observed and trust must be established. It is important to be seen as trustworthy by those who are in the field in order to record an accurate representation of events (Babbie, 2013). Furthermore, the researcher must overcome obstacles that present themselves during the participant-observation process and try to remain without bias. Over-identification with the participants can be detrimental to research, thereby leading to both methodological and personal challenges (Gans, 1999). As stated by Goffman (2002), “You’ve got to control your associations” (p. 151).

Within the context of ethnographic fieldwork, field notes are the written account of the observations collected (Merriam, 1998). Thus, field notes are the raw data that allow for observations to be made knowingly (Burgess, 1982). Because observations occur in a natural setting, field notes represent a firsthand account of the phenomena being studied (Merriam, 2009). Field notes are a combination of jotted notes as well as full accounts of the day. For example, Goffman recommends writing in full at the conclusion of each observation day (Goffman, 2002). Moreover, urgency is necessary when transcribing data in order to eliminate memory loss (Wengraf, 2001). Thus, for this dissertation, observation and field notes that are in-the-moment were recorded throughout the process of participant observation.

Field notes tell a story, in that a successive description of events and details is vital to the understanding of what is being observed (Burgess, 1982; Lofland & Lofland, 1984). That is, the researcher must be thorough in the communication of field notes, ensuring that the mundanity of everyday life is not missed through the recording of events. According to Merriam (2009), field notes should be highly descriptive and describe the participants, the setting, the activities and behaviors of the participants, as well as what the researcher does. Additionally, included are verbal descriptions, direct quotations or the general substance of what is being discussed, and the researcher's personal comments (Merriam, 2009). Thus, personal impressions are important when recording the relationships and emotional experiences observed in the field (Burgess, 1982).

Subjectivity is just as important as objectivity during the field experience (Wengraf, 2001). In recording field notes, the researcher not only keeps a running record of what is being observed, he or she also notes personal reactions and feelings regarding the experience. These notes should be periodically analyzed in relation to interpretations so that the researcher can consider his or her assumptions (Merriam, 2009). Sometimes labeled the "researcher's position," *reflexivity* is "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as instrument'" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). Indeed, understanding achieved through reflexivity can even assist in preliminary data analysis (Merriam, 2009).

For this dissertation, capturing observations via field notes was appropriate due to the different nature of each EVP event. That is, observations of these group settings

allowed the behavior and interactions of many individuals to be systematically recorded (see Appendix A: Observation Schedule). Approximately 27 hours of EVP observations occurred and 54 pages of field notes were recorded. Time spent in participant observation also provided an opportunity to develop stronger connections with participants, fostering greater willingness to participate in an in-depth interview following the EVP event.

### **Visual Documentation**

As a visual mode of recording observations, photographs are often used to record what takes place in the field (Peñaloza & Cayla, 2006). Similar to the importance of jotted field notes (Burgess, 1982; Lofland & Lofland, 1984), photographs can evoke memories of the field experience, enriching both observations and conversations with visual records of the lived experience in detail (Peñaloza & Cayla, 2006). Through photographs, the researcher effectively combines thoughts and feelings to increase the depth of raw data collected in order to build theory and support the research objectives of the study (Peñaloza & Cayla, 2006). According to Peñaloza and Cayla (2006), “ethnographic studies of visual images and material artifacts allow us to draw meanings from the experiential...interacting with artifacts in those spaces and forging their identities and social worlds. They help us go beyond talk and text” (p. 279).

For the purposes of this dissertation, photography was used to document activities and behaviors observed during the EVPs, and a total of 199 photos were taken. Photographs offer a juncture between the written and the visual representation of lived experience (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015). In this way, the photograph offers support for the main narrative of the textual conversation, just as field notes accompany observation

(Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015). Photography was employed to capture visual images reflective of the purpose, objectives, and guiding questions of the study. As such, the photographs captured the participants in an EVP event and the activities that occurred as the event unfolded. Photographs of the general EVP event environment were taken, as well as specific interactions that occurred between event participants. The photos were used to supplement the recorded field notes and to visually document the employee volunteer experience. To aid in recall, it was important to record the time, place, and event information of each photograph. With each EVP setting being distinct, the photographs allowed for comparison between events and the various EVP activities. Photographs were edited using Photoshop to remove identifiers and to preserve confidentiality.

## **Interviews**

Interviewing is a basic method for gathering qualitative data and is considered to be the most powerful method of inquiry in qualitative research (McCracken, 1988; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Wengraf, 2001). Although field notes provide a great deal of in-depth data, greater detail was necessary to fully interpret what was observed. That is, it is important to question and to understand what something is really like (Van Maanen, 1990). Within an ethnographic study, interviews allow for follow up, and are typically used alongside observation in the field as a means of adding dimension to the data. According to Patton (2002), “we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe...the purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (pp. 340-341). This idea is reinforced by Merriam (2009), who stated that interviewing allows for “...understanding the phenomenon of interest

from the participant's perspective, not the researcher's" (p. 14). Moreover, according to O'Reilly (2009), "in-depth conversations (or interviews) give the ethnographer and respondent time to delve more deeply, to express their feelings, to reflect on events and beliefs, and to even expose their ambivalences" (p. 125).

In qualitative research, the interview is one of the most revealing forms of information gathering that is both descriptive and analytic (McCracken, 1998). As stated by Babbie (2013), in qualitative research, an interview

[I]s an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry, including the topics to be covered, but not a set of questions that must be asked with the particular words and in a particular order. (p. 346)

That is, the researcher does not have to follow a script. Conversely, qualitative interviews are more focused, deeper, and more detailed than ordinary conversations. Yet they follow many of the same rules (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The purpose of the interview is to understand meanings participants have constructed to make sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2009). It is important to acknowledge the participant as the expert and that his or her experiences will dictate the conversation. Overall, it is a conversation with a purpose, in which the respondent does most of the talking.

There are three types of interviews: *highly structured*, *semi-structured*, and *unstructured*. Highly structured interviews follow detailed guides and questions to be rigidly followed (Merriam, 1998). The semi-structured interview allows for flexibility, while the unstructured interview allows for exploration into the phenomenon (Merriam,

2009). Ethnographic research tends to rely on semi- or unstructured interviews versus the rigid, highly structured interview (O'Reilly, 2009), thereby allowing discovery to occur and the phenomenon to be explored from a participant's perspective.

An important aspect of the semi-structured interview relates to how the questions are designed. As such, questions should provide guidance on what to ask and of whom to ask it (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). For this dissertation, field interviews were conducted during participant observation of the EVP (see Appendix B: Field Interview Schedule). The field interviews were enhanced by more in-depth interviews conducted with select employees and community members participating in the EVP events. In-depth interviews occurred after the EVP (see Appendix C: In-Depth Interview Schedule). In-depth interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via telephone. The semi-structured approach allowed the conversations to be reflexive for both the researcher and the participant.

To achieve the goals of this dissertation, I conducted field and semi-structured interviews in order to gain the perspective of individuals associated with multiple EVPs. A total of 68 field interviews and 50 semi-structured, in-depth interviews took place throughout the data collection process. As will be discussed next, employees participating in the EVP and community members associated with the nonprofit served by the EVP comprised the sample.

### **Participant Sample and Selection**

Qualitative research offers a deep perspective into a phenomenon. The researcher, as an instrument of data collection, is unique to the qualitative process. He or she has the

ability to be reactive and adapt his or her techniques as the process moves forward (Merriam, 1998). Based on the purpose and objectives of the phenomenon under study, the researcher determines when, where, and how to collect, record, and analyze data (Burgess, 1982). Proper data sampling and selection are therefore at the core of good qualitative research. An appropriate sampling strategy, in turn, leads to more efficient data analysis.

To achieve the purpose of this dissertation, I observed employee volunteer programs (EVPs) as a type of CSR and specifically a form of corporate philanthropy. Guided by the objectives of the dissertation, a purposive sample (Patton, 2002) was used to select four apparel brands that engage in CSR through corporate philanthropy, and specifically through EVPs. According to Patton (2002),

...the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling. (p. 230)

Approval to conduct the research was received by UNCG IRB (see Appendix D).

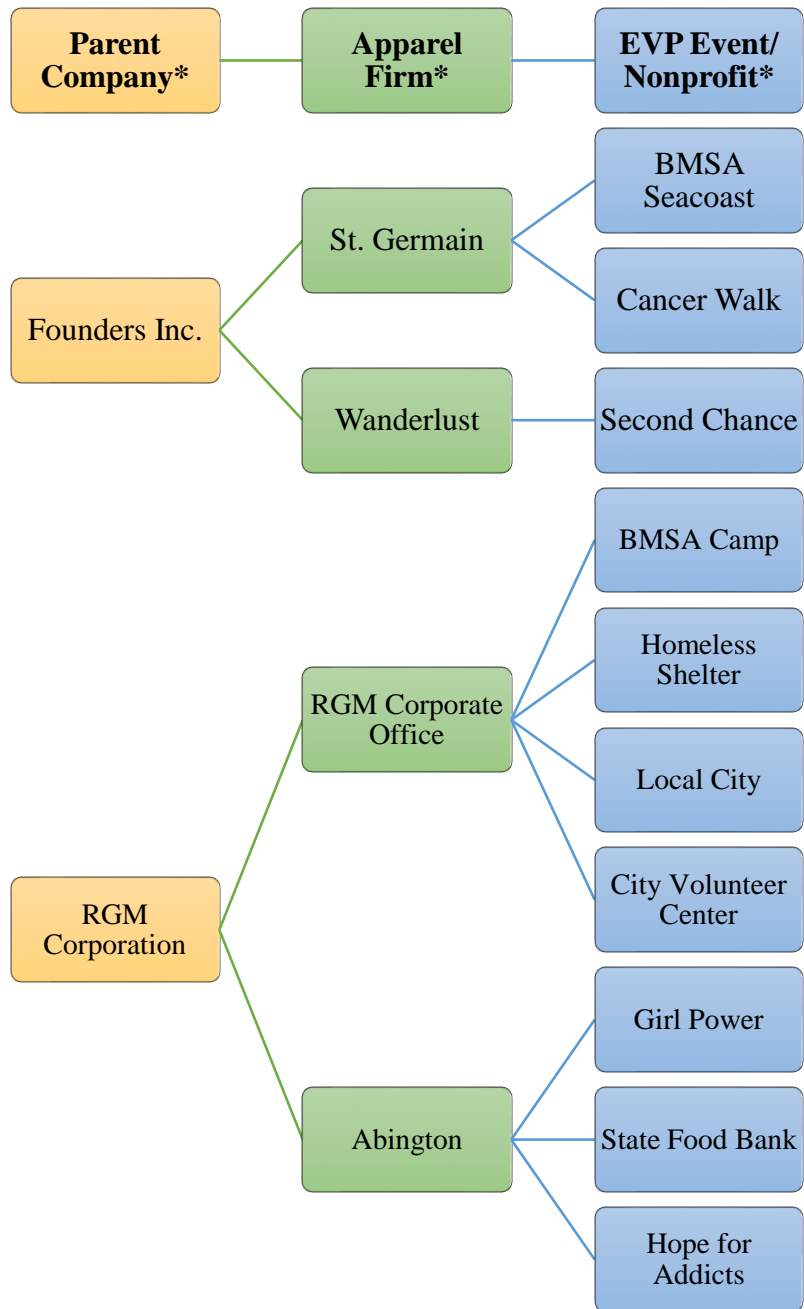
In this study, the “field” was comprised of a total of ten EVP events held by four firms. Various rankings were consulted to select the four apparel firms from two larger parent organizations included in this study. Currently, apparel firms account for 29 of the 2016 *Global 2000* Forbes annual comprehensive list of the world’s largest and most powerful public companies, as measured by a composite score of revenue, profits, assets, and market value. Upon review of the such rankings, Founders Inc. and RGM



Corporation (pseudonyms) both received the “*above*” accolade from Forbes, and per company press releases, both firms have been recognized for social responsibility by various organizations. Additionally, both firms have been recognized by *Corporate Responsibility Magazine* as 2017’s “Top 100 Corporate Citizens.” *Corporate Responsibility Magazine* tracks trends in the five primary segments of corporate responsibility: energy and the environment, risk management, governance and compliance, employee relations, and human rights. Thus, Founders Inc. and RGM Corporation are examples of apparel firms with committed social responsibility initiatives. Additionally, both are multi-national apparel and accessory companies based out of the United States and, organizationally, each consists of multiple smaller brands with unique identities, thereby offering complexity for the analysis. To gain access to the EVPs, four gatekeepers within each organization were consulted. As a result, four firms within the auspices of each organization were chosen for observation.

Seen below, Figure 9 represents the two larger parent organizations, the four firms, and the ten EVPs observed in this dissertation. Under the Founders Inc. umbrella, St. Germain and Wanderlust EVPs were observed. For RGM Corporation, I observed EVPs from Abington and RGM’s North American corporate offices in conjunction with one of its smaller denim brands. In order to compare sampling unit with sampling unit (Mason, 1996), similar organizational EVP events were chosen. EVPs were associated with either nonprofits or local community organizations: *Body, Mind, and Spirit Association (BMSA)*, *Cancer Walk*, *Second Chance*, various homeless shelters, local municipalities, *City Volunteer Center*, *Girl Power*, *State Food Bank*, and *Hope for*

*Addicts.* Individual EVP events offered by the four firms observed included sorting clothes, refurbishing a drug and rehabilitation live-in facility, and cleaning up a local city street. Observation of each of the ten events was documented through field notes and photographs. As previously stated, time in the field equated to 27 hours, with 54 pages of single-spaced field notes and 199 photographs. Names of individual firms, nonprofits, and EVP events have been changed to preserve confidentiality.



\*Pseudonyms are used to preserve confidentiality

*Figure 9. Sample by Parent Company, Firm, and EVP/Nonprofit*

Interviews occurred with employees (Table 1 below) as well as community members (Table 2 below). As defined in Chapter I, community members included those

who are employed by or are volunteers of the nonprofit being served by the firm's EVP. The total number of field interviews varied based on the number of participants involved in each activity. Figure 10 illustrates the breakdown of interviews from each EVP. While in the field, 68 field interviews occurred. To gather richer data, 50 in-depth interviews also occurred. In-depth interviewing allowed for the sample to reflect the purpose of the dissertation by gathering differing perspectives from the selected participants (Merriam, 2009). As a result, in-depth interviews with a total of 38 employee and 12 community member were conducted. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and two hours. With participant approval, each in-depth interview was recorded, for a total of approximately 26 hours of interviews. Figure 10 illustrates the breakdown of field and in-depth interviews conducted per each firm, EVP, and stakeholder group.

Table 1

*Participant Information: Employees*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Nonprofit Partner</b>
Alice*	St. Germain	Sales Associate	BMSA
Amelia*	RGM	Senior Manager	BMSA
Anna*	St. Germain	Retail General Manager	Cancer Walk
Ashley*	St. Germain	Senior Merchandising Manager	BMSA
Ava*	Wanderlust	Retail General Manager	Second Chance
Barbara	Abington	Human Resources Business Partner	Girl Power
Beth*	St. Germain	Department Specialist	BMSA
Carla*	RGM	Lead Analyst	Homeless shelters
Chris	Wanderlust	Associate Manager	Second Chance
Chuck	RGM	Analyst	BMSA
Cindy	Wanderlust	Customer Experience Supervisor	Second Chance
Crystal	St. Germain	Sales Associate	Cancer Walk
David*	St. Germain	Senior Merchandise Manager	BMSA
Debra	RGM	Patternmaker	Homeless shelters
Edward**	Abington	Community Service Manager	N/A
Elizabeth*	RGM	Patternmaker	Homeless shelters
Ellie*	Wanderlust	Retail General Manager	Second Chance
Emily*	Abington	Vice President	Hope for Addicts
Erin*	St. Germain	Business Operations Manager	Cancer Walk
Evelyn*	Abington	Analyst	State Food Bank
George**	St. Germain	Field Community Leader	N/A
Gillian*	RGM	Manager	City Volunteer Center
Heather*	Abington	Director	Girl Power
Jada	St. Germain	Sales Associate	Cancer Walk
James*	RGM	Senior Director	City Volunteer Center
Janice	St. Germain	Sales Associate	Cancer Walk
Jeanine*	RGM	Analyst	Local City
Jeremiah	Wanderlust	Customer Experience Supervisor	Second Chance
John	Wanderlust	Sales Associate	Second Chance

<b>Name</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Nonprofit Partner</b>
Kara*	RGM	Patternmaker	Homeless shelters
Karen*	Abington	Planner	State Food Bank
Kennedy	Abington	Product Line Coordinator	Girl Power
Layla*	RGM	Coordinator	Local City
Leah*	RGM	Customer Service Representative	Local City
Lesie*	RGM	Technician	Homeless shelters
Linda	Abington	Executive Assistant	Hope for Addicts
Madelyn*	RGM	Administrator	BMSA
Makayla	St. Germain	Sales Associate	Cancer Walk
Maria	Abington	Executive Assistant	Hope for Addicts
Oliver*	Abington	Senior Director	Hope for Addicts
Olivia*	RGM	Coordinator	Homeless shelters
Patrick*	RGM	Technician	Homeless shelters
Rachel*	Abington	Senior Planner	Hope for Addicts
Rita**	St. Germain	District Manager	Cancer Walk
Rose**	RGM	Human Resource Business Partner	N/A
Sam*	RGM	Manager	City Volunteer Center
Sandy	Abington	Senior Manager	Girl Power
Sophia*	RGM	Manager	Homeless shelters
Stacy	Abington	Inventory Analyst	State Food Bank
Teresa*	St. Germain	Business Operations Manager	BMSA
Trinity	St. Germain	Women's Lead	Cancer Walk
Vanessa*	Abington	Associate Manager	Girl Power
Wendy*	St. Germain	Senior Business Operations Manager	Cancer Walk
William*	Abington	Senior Manager	State Food Bank
Zion	RGM	Business Intelligence	BMSA
Zoe*	RGM	Senior technician	Homeless shelters

Note. \* Indicates Field and In-Depth Interview. \*\* Indicates Gatekeeper.

Table 2

*Participant Information: Community Members*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Nonprofit</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Firm Partner</b>
Amy	Cancer Walk	Communications Manager	St. Germain
Angela	Volunteer Center	Campaign Associate	RGM
Destiny	Second Chance	Boutique Coordinator	Wanderlust
Faith	Volunteer Center	Director of Volunteers	RGM
Jasmine	State Food Bank	Volunteer Coordinator	Abington
Lori	Girl Power	Marketing Manager	Abington
Mary	Girl Power	Program Director	Abington
Meredith	BMSA	Outdoor Education Instructor	RGM
Michael	Hope for Addicts	Executive Director	Abington
Nicole	BMSA	Director of CIT	St. Germain
Summer	State Food Bank	Volunteer Engagement	Abington
Tammy	Second Chance	Volunteer Manager	Wanderlust

- **BMSA Seacoast**

- 1 Community member interview
- 5 Employee field interviews
- 5 Employee in-depth interviews

- **Cancer Walk Foundation**

- 1 Community member interviews
- 9 Employee field interviews
- 3 Employee in-depth interviews

St. Germain



- **Second Chance**

- 2 Community Member Interviews
- 6 Employee field interviews
- 2 Employee in-depth interviews

Wanderlust



- **BMSA**

- 1 Community member interview
- 4 Employee field interviews
- 2 Employee in-depth interviews

- **Homeless Shelter**

- 9 Employee field interviews
- 8 Employee in-depth interviews

- **Local City**

- 3 Employee field interviews
- 3 Employee in-depth interviews

- **City Volunteer Center**

- 2 Community member interviews
- 3 Employee field interviews
- 3 Employee in-depth interviews

RGM Corporate Office



- **Girl Power**

- 2 Community member interviews
- 5 Employee field interviews
- 2 Employee in-depth interviews

- **State Food Bank**

- 2 community member interviews
- 4 Employee field interviews
- 3 Employee in-depth interviews

- **Hope for Addicts**

- 1 Community member interview
- 5 Employee field interviews only
- 3 Employee in-depth interviews

Abington



Figure 10. Interview Breakdown by Firm, Nonprofit, and EVP



## **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Once data collection was complete, field notes were typed, photographs annotated and all interviews (field and in-depth) were transcribed verbatim. Field notes and interview transcripts were then examined alongside the photographs to identify themes emerging from the data relative to the research objectives (Clifford, 1986). Spiggle's (1994) recommendations for qualitative data analysis and interpretation were then applied. Spiggle (1994) suggests differences between analysis and interpretation, in that while analysis "breaks down or divides some complex whole into its constitute parts" (p. 492), interpretation makes sense of the results, offering understanding by assigning meaning to the data. This process required going back and forth between the various types of data to develop a conceptually rich thematic interpretation.

Following Spiggle (1994), analysis began with categorization of the data, in which the participants' experiences were classified or labeled into units of data for the purpose of coding. This was followed by abstraction, where the identified categories were grouped into more general conceptual ideas. Last, a comparison across categories was explored for similarities and differences within the data.

To ensure validity, member checks or *respondent validation* was incorporated into the analysis process. Respondent validation includes soliciting feedback from participants on the emerging findings (Merriam, 2009). This was completed via email correspondence. Through this process, participating members were able to recognize their experiences in the analysis and provide further suggestions. This process, in turn, led to the next step, which was the interpretation of results.

Thematic interpretation is often used to explore the results of qualitative data to decipher the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences and how these meanings link together and form patterns (Spiggle, 1994). A back and forth, iterative process was used to identify emergent themes (Spiggle, 1994), and to ensure consistency, these themes were then linked back to the literature. One of the most important components of the interpretation process is that of integration. Integration involves articulating the relationship between the meanings discovered and the broader theoretical issues guiding the study (Spiggle, 1994). The emergent themes are presented in Chapters IV – VI, which articulate the interpretation of the data. Once the themes emerged and were articulated, they were examined relative to the literature and the theoretical significance, as discussed in Chapter VII. Conclusions based on the thematic interpretation and theoretical discussion were developed and are presented in Chapter VIII.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the methodological framework of this dissertation was outlined. The goals of qualitative research in general and ethnography in particular were discussed relative to those of the study. Specific data collection methods employed and goals reflective of the participant sample and selection were described. Last, the approach used in data analysis and interpretation was discussed. The next chapter is the first of three Thematic Interpretation chapters and focuses on the EVP as CSR.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THEMATIC INTERPRETATION PART I, THE EVP AS CSR: LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

In this Chapter, Part I of the thematic interpretation, participants' perspectives on CSR and EVPs are discussed in a broad sense to provide an in-depth understanding of the philanthropic initiatives of the apparel firms included in this study. As will be discussed, interpretation of the data revealed common motives of CSR across firms, especially the use of the EVP as a particular strategy. From the perspective of the participants, CSR is an obligation of the firm, with corporate philanthropy being one approach to meeting this obligation (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991). Moreover, as a type of philanthropic initiative, an EVP is a means of utilizing firm resources for good (Merz, Peloza, & Chen, 2010; Points of Light, 2014). Thus, the firm is able to achieve action within the local community through the efforts of the EVP. As revealed by participants in this study, an EVP is an effective CSR strategy for addressing social problems that are "close to home."

As seen in this chapter, EVPs are a form of philanthropy. Per the discussion of EVPs in Chapter II, such efforts arise from a firm's focus on CSR strategy. As such, the employees of the firm are used as a resource, targeting the needs of local communities and fulfilling philanthropic goals through volunteerism. Data collected for this dissertation reveal that level of involvement in EVPs varies based on the firm, its corporate culture, and its overall commitment to CSR. Based on the analysis of data, two

themes emerged that help to identify the links between CSR, corporate philanthropy, and EVPs: (1) *EVPs as CSR Strategy*, and (2) *Defining the EVP*. Commonalities that surfaced across participants' experiences help to define and shape each theme, while providing a necessary foundation for the next two chapters.

### **EVPs as CSR Strategy**

As discussed in Chapter I, CSR refers to the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of an organization (Carroll, 1979), and it is considered to be the framework for good corporate citizenship. To understand how an EVP fits into the CSR framework, participants were asked to share their perspectives on how CSR is defined. Throughout the interviews conducted for this dissertation, participants revealed the various constructs of CSR. Their perspectives on CSR highlights distinctions between the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of the concept, while emphasizing the interdependence between them (Elkington, 1997; Wiese et al., 2012). Indeed, participants identified an increasing awareness of the various dimensions of CSR and how the resources of a firm can be used to meet the needs of local communities. One specific firm resource identified in this study is the firm's employees. Employees may be utilized as a conduit of social change through the volunteer efforts offered by the firm. In turn, employees become intermediaries, implementing firm CSR strategy. To understand why EVPs are an important approach to CSR, three subthemes are examined in the following sections: (a) *Meeting the Obligation*, (b) *Executing Strategic Action*, and (c) *Orienting to the Local*.

## Meeting the Obligation

As outlined in previous chapters, CSR is an obligation of business, developed as a means for firms to incorporate goals beyond economic gain into their strategies and operations. Carroll (1991) introduced a conceptual model depicting four CSR constructs: (1) *economic responsibility*, (2) *legal responsibility*, (3) *ethical responsibility*, and (4) *discretionary/philanthropic responsibility*. This dissertation examines how firms demonstrate CSR through the construct of discretionary/philanthropy responsibility, also known as corporate philanthropy (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991). Corporate philanthropy may include a range of activities, from giving money and making in-kind donations, to encouraging employee volunteerism and engaging in social cause-related activities (Merz et al., 2010). At present, EVPs are often utilized as a firm's philanthropic approach because they emphasize employee engagement in the form of volunteerism to target the needs of the local community.

To better understand how CSR is the foundation of the EVP, participants were asked to define CSR. Interestingly, participants often apply the constructs of Carroll's (1991) model to their individual interpretations of CSR. For example, Kara, an employee at RGM, described CSR as, "a companies' self-regulatory mechanism that keeps with the laws while maintaining ethical standards." The emphasis, according to Kara, is on the legal and ethical components of CSR. In contrast, Oliver, who works for Abington, highlighted the economic and philanthropic constructs of CSR, describing it as, "the blending of commerce and justice, doing well, while doing good." Similarly, Layla, who works in sustainability at RGM, discussed how firms should have a concern for more

than just profits by stating, “CSR is when companies care about something other than the bottom line.” In the same vein, Ava, who is a manager at Wanderlust described CSR as, “...making time to give back, not just all about gaining.” Thus, these statements from employees in the apparel industry reflect the impetus for firms to incorporate various philanthropic initiatives into CSR strategy.

According to participants, when incorporating the framework of CSR into business operations, it is the responsibility of a firm to think beyond profits. That is, when defining CSR, several participants incorporated the 3Ps triple bottom line approach of people, planet, and profit (Elkington, 1997). For example, Olivia, who works for RGM, referenced this approach when describing CSR. She stated, “It’s a business approach that contributes to not only delivering economic and social benefits, but also environmental [benefits] for all stakeholders.” Similarly, Elizabeth, who also works at RGM, talked about the importance of people and planet when discussing the responsibilities of a firm:

It is important to work to keep the planet as pollution free as possible. It is equally important to keep and maintain safe work environments. To me, corporate responsibility means a company has an ethical obligation to have work practices that help to maintain the environment and a social responsibility for inclusiveness for their employees and their consumers.

That is, according to participants like Elizabeth, the constructs of CSR are not independent of each other, but instead, represent a symbiotic relationship between the firm and society. Further supporting the ideas expressed by Olivia and Elizabeth, Gillian described CSR as, “...corporations taking responsibility for social issues and environmental issues. Issues that impact all people.... I love how socially conscious our

company is.” Clearly, participants’ views on CSR mirror Elkington’s (1997) 3Ps framework, taking into account the economic, social, and environmental aspects of business fundamental to a firm’s decisions, and resulting in positive gains for multiple stakeholders.

To reinforce the idea of the triple bottom line, when defining CSR, participants often referenced the resources of a firm. Such resources are the basis for corporate philanthropy and the foundation of support firms may offer communities. To understand how firms meet stakeholder obligations through its assets, participants were asked about the importance of CSR. David, a manager at St. Germain, not only discussed the responsibilities of business to conscientiously utilize firm resources, but he also pointed to the positive effects CSR can have on multiple stakeholders,

Corporations have the financial means, as well as the manpower and capacity, to truly make a difference in their communities and world through such activities as volunteering, making donations, fundraising...etc. It is literally their responsibility as a large corporation to utilize their resources for the better. It’s unfortunate not all do, but those that choose to make a difference portray a more positive image which resonates with consumers on a more positive level.

This approach to CSR idealizes how firms should utilize their assets, especially profits, to help local communities. David’s response also ties in the various forms of philanthropy CSR can offer, including monetary donations as well as volunteerism.

As revealed in this study, what began as a voluntary movement about investing in both business and community, CSR is now generally viewed as an obligation. This point of view is reflected in how participants define CSR and, in turn, use the EVP as a conduit

of support to help stakeholders and the broader community. For example, some participants, such as Ellie, a manager at Wanderlust, summed up CSR in a few short words, “[CSR] is the obligation for businesses to give back.” The responsibility of business to help others was shared by several participants. Karen, who works at RGM, discussed the growing obligations of firms when referencing CSR, “Today, it’s not enough for companies to take care of their employees, they need to take care of their communities too. To me that is what CSR is all about.” According to Ellie and Karen, the expectation is that firms will share the wealth gained through profits by supporting others, especially those in the community who are in need.

Although CSR is viewed as the obligation of the firm to “do good,” employees as stakeholders help create the demand for CSR initiatives (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) and, in turn, such efforts create value for all stakeholders (Peloza & Shang, 2011; Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006). Interestingly, most participants indicated a desire to work for a “responsible” apparel firm, thereby positioning CSR and corporate philanthropy as necessities. Several participants made the point of saying as much. For example, Emily, who works for Abington, stated, “I want to work for a firm with a soul.” In the same vein, Jeanine, an analyst at RGM, talked about helping those in need at home, “I want to work for a company who strives to help the people in their community rather than make a profit.” Finally, Ava, who is a store manager at Wanderlust discussed the obligation of the firm to move beyond simply making a profit, “I want to work for a company that does more.” CSR creates value for employees as stakeholders in as much as EVPs, as a CSR strategy, provide an outlet for employees to be of service. According



to participants in this study, EVPs are the result of corporate philanthropy and provide the opportunity to help address social issues close to home.

### **Executing Strategic Action**

CSR is often discussed concurrently with sustainable business measures, in as much as sustainable practices seek to address both current and future needs of stakeholders (Wiese et al., 2012). One such practice is volunteerism. As discussed throughout this dissertation, volunteerism in the form of an EVP is a planned effort that seeks to motivate and enable employees to serve community needs through the leadership of the employer (Points of Light, 2017). It is through the execution of strategic CSR actions, such as EVPs, that the needs of the local community may be addressed by the individual stakeholders of the firm. Thus, EVPs empower employees to take action and be active participants in social change targeting the needs of local communities.

According to the participants in this study, the implications of CSR should extend beyond the four walls of a firm in order to produce global impacts. As such, CSR reflects the voluntary integration of social concerns and practices into the everyday operations of a firm (Dahlsrud, 2008). For example, participants discussed the connection between business practices and the needs of society. When asked to define CSR, Carla, an analyst for RGM, stated, “It is a corporation’s responsibility to make the world in which we live a better place.” Likewise, Emily, a vice president for Abington, framed CSR as means of “using your corporate resources to do good.” As will be illustrated throughout Chapters V and VI, EVPs are one method of using firm resources to impact multiple stakeholders in a

positive way. Similarly, another participant, James, who is a senior director at RGM, elaborated on the long-term impact CSR may have on society more broadly,

[CSR is] a corporation understanding that they have a tremendous impact on the society within which they operate and subsequently acting in such a way that recognizes that in a positive way. Corporations have a greater responsibility than just profit and shareholder return, they can literally change the world and be a force for good.

According to James, CSR can be strategic in action, utilizing the assets of a firm to achieve a social return on investment. That is, for some participants, CSR can go beyond just “giving back,” to actually do the kind of good that has long-lasting effects on society as a whole.

Additionally, based on participant responses, it appears there are steps in the process of achieving the necessary level of impact CSR can have on the broader community. The first step is awareness of the bigger issues facing society. In order for EVPs to impact social change, the firm must first integrate community need into its CSR strategy. As Leah, who works for RGM explained, “I think [the firm is] always looking for ways to participate in the bigger picture of things.” In a similar vein, Alice, who is a part-time sales associate for St. Germain stated, “[The firm] seems like it is always growing and continues to keep up with social responsibility of what is going on in the world.” According to Leah and Alice, the two firms the participants are employed by provide guidance on global issues to stakeholders through CSR action. Thus, these participants perceive that, due to increased awareness, firms should start making a difference by looking for ways to make a sustainable impact through social change.

Although this study focuses on the needs of local communities, participants also acknowledge global issues and the interconnections between social matters that firms must address in their implementation of CSR strategy. That is, when asked to discuss the importance of CSR, some participants discussed the needs of both local and global communities. For example, Beth, who is employed by St. Germain stated,

I am a firm believer in the socioeconomic model for businesses. Every business has a responsibility to give back to their communities. They are a part of a social network and should be expected to help out if they can. Firms have the same responsibility to help out the community both locally and globally, that we all individually share as well.

According to Beth, firms are bound by a social network, and this network connects social concerns to its stakeholders. Yet, in order to make a difference, it is the employee in particular who acts on the strategic goals of the firm to execute CSR initiatives. Vanessa, who works for Abington stated,

There is the need for large-scale companies to take a stand and make a sustainable impact in their environment, their community, and in the broader globe...assuming they have the resources to do so. It's engaging employees to participate with a hope that they continue the service in their local communities. It's giving back for today and for future generations.

Participants recognize the power of a large firm, in that it can use its resources to not only impact global issues, but to make positive contributions locally. Participants recognize that CSR strategy is not just about factory workers in foreign countries, it is also about making an impact at home. That is, through the strategic actions of the EVP, stakeholders

are empowered through civic engagement to address social issues and support the communities in which they live and work.

Once the key social issues are identified, in order to use its resources for good, the next step is for the firm to take action through the lens of CSR. One way in which firms can implement CSR strategy is through volunteerism in local communities. Accordingly, employees are a resource of the firm, giving both personal and firm time to help those in need. As discussed by Karen, who works for Abington, a firm can rely on its employees to influence social change, “I think a company of this size should be a leader and continuously give back and teach and lead employees on how to make lasting impacts.” That is, stakeholders of large firms can be utilized as a conduit of good and EVPs have the power to educate employees on social needs, along with the best way to influence change. In a similar vein, Sam, who is a manager at RGM, described CSR as, “Leveraging your power as an organization to positively impact the world and solve tough problems.” Thus, CSR not only meets the immediate needs of multiple stakeholders, but can serve as a foundation for a long-term plan for addressing societal issues.

In summary, EVPs are utilized as a strategic approach to CSR, designed to address social concerns both globally and locally. In order to achieve the necessary level of impact at home, two things are required by the firm’s employees: awareness and action. Employees must be made aware of social concerns before the necessary action can take place. Action is achieved by using firm resources in the form of volunteerism to effect change. As reflected in the interpretation of the data here and in the next two

chapters, once the steps of awareness and action are achieved, it is through EVPs that a firm is able to address local concerns.

### **Orienting to the Local**

As discussed in Chapter II, it is through corporate philanthropy that firms form a “partnership with the community,” and act as a means to support society (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014). That is, according to Jeanine, it is “the responsibility a corporation has to give back to its community.” Giving back as corporate philanthropy typically involves donating money, goods, or services, as well as the donation of time through volunteerism (Austin, 2000; Galaskiewicz & Colman, 2006; Madden et al., 2006; Wymer & Samu, 2003). Thus, through EVPs, firms can implement CSR to provide much needed support to local communities.

To better understand corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry, participants were asked to provide their opinions about the particular CSR initiatives of their employers. Olivia, who works for RGM stated, “I think the corporate world has to get involved in our communities, financial and through volunteers. We all need to make our city a better place to work and live.” She elaborated on why it is personally important to her, stating, “A company that is invested in their community is more likely to be invested in me.” That is, a firm that cares about one stakeholder will likely care about many. Other participants pointed to the various ways that philanthropy may be offered by a firm through its employees and the importance of such initiatives. For example, Sam, who is also employed by RGM stated,

We encourage our associates to serve through multiple vehicles and allow them to donate their finances as well. Not everyone is an executive and can donate large amounts of money. We are grateful for them, but others like myself can support company initiatives through volunteering. It's important to make an impact and we offer different ways to do that.

Sam and Olivia point to the different philanthropic initiatives their firms offer local communities and that philanthropy can include volunteerism, as well as financial donations, in order to positively impact those in need who are close to home.

As discussed in the previous section, understanding the needs of the local community and acting on those needs is an integral component of CSR, and, as a result, the EVP. Participants seem to recognize the local support such initiatives may offer. For example, Kennedy, who works for Abington, described CSR as, “A company's way to go into the community and give back. It is the responsibility of the business to reach out to the local community and help support those in need.” Interestingly, participants actually seem to view local efforts as an obligation of the firm. Leslie, who is employed by RGM, voiced similar sentiments, “In my mind, CSR is the initiatives that corporations put into place, to do their part, to help out the communities in which they effect.” Thus, both participants discussed the needs of the local community and the civic responsibility of the firm to do more. As observed in this study, the EVP, as a form of philanthropy, is a CSR strategy that increases civic engagement and ultimately improves local communities.

As mentioned earlier, participants often cited the resources of the firm when defining CSR. Indeed, firms have the opportunity to increase civic engagement through volunteerism as a CSR strategy. Volunteerism is a type of philanthropy that, when

translated through engagement, uses the firm's people as a resource. As explained by Madelyn, an administrator at RGM, her firm focuses on helping different groups in the local community through the assistance of the firm's employees.

CSR is when companies invest their resources in the communities that they employ... We consistently review our practices to ensure they are environmentally sustainable. We partner with nearby schools to help them incorporate learning that will produce graduates that are equipped to work for us. We offer our employees diverse and numerous opportunities to serve and contribute to local causes... [CSR] helps employees keep engaged in our local community.

Madelyn frequently mentioned "we" as a collective whole when discussing the firm, her coworkers, and the application of firm resources. She also sees a link between the firm's CSR strategy and engaging employees to support the community. Thus, in Madelyn's view, CSR strategies are executed through the firm's employees, who are encouraged to participate in various locally-supported civic engagement opportunities.

At the same time, community members identified the social return on investment for communities achieved through CSR strategy, as well as the social and economic benefits acquired by the firm. For example, Lori, a marketing manager for the nonprofit *Girl Power* explained,

CSR is looking beyond just profits and having an invested interest in the community that your company is in. It is realizing we are all in this boat together and need to support each other for the betterment of mankind.

Participants seem to view CSR as a community support system. Accordingly, Amy, a communications manager for the nonprofit *Cancer Walk*, described CSR as vital to the

livelihood of the community. She said, “[CSR] is a corporation's responsibility to the people, economic and eco-system in their community.” Overall, participants recognize the partnership between a firm and the community as a means to achieving positive outcomes and influencing the change necessary for community improvements.

Throughout this study, participants discussed firm-led volunteerism as a conduit of engagement with nonprofits. As such, to specifically address the needs of the local community, firms often partner with other stakeholders. Indeed, nonprofits are community members with a stakeholder voice. To address this point, participants who represent nonprofits were asked to share their stakeholder perspective on CSR. According to Nicole, a director at the BMSA, firms may use CSR, “to serve the community the best that it can, in as many ways as it can.” A similar sentiment was expressed by Summer, a volunteer coordinator for a regional food bank. She views the relationship between the firm and the local community as a vital partnership, stating,

[CSR] is a company's responsibility to help the community. The community is the reason for the company's success. It is giving back through volunteering, to better the community of their consumers and workers, who make the company's financial success possible.

In a similar vein, Mary, the program director for *Girl Power* described CSR as a return on a firm's investment in the community. She stated,

It is something that all companies should be involved in. It is an opportunity to invest in communities with the revenue that is generated from successful business practices. Investing in nonprofits benefits not only those in the community but also those who are involved in giving back.



Mary discussed the civic responsibility of the firm, explaining how the partnership between the firm and the nonprofit provides value for many stakeholders. She continued by elaborating on why corporate philanthropy, as a form of CSR, offers localized benefits. She explained,

We are all in this together and while corporate tends to focus on revenue and new and improved, the best investment in those dollars is for the betterment of those in need in all communities. It is an added bonus to companies to connect their employees for good while having major impact in the communities they serve.

According to participants who are community members, CSR accrues the capital of the community through the assets of the firm. Thus, participants view CSR and the support offered through corporate philanthropy (and specifically EVPs) as an important way to invest in local communities.

There is obviously a strong motivation for nonprofits to partner with for-profit firms (Amato & Amato, 2012; Austin, 2000; Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Wymer & Samu, 2003), yet, some participants who are community members expressed hesitation when discussing volunteer partnerships driven by CSR strategy. For example, Faith, the Director of Engagement for a nonprofit focused on volunteerism, emphasized that “corporations should be willing to and want to give back to the communities they are located in and profit from.” However, participants also noted the difficulty in finding firms that are willing to offer incentives for their employees to volunteer. On the other hand, Jasmine discussed the opposing struggle of “not having enough projects,” or the nonprofit being overwhelmed due to too many volunteers. She emphasized the

importance of clear communication between the nonprofit and the for-profit firm, along with the “need to balance the project with the outcomes.” A similar sentiment was voiced by Tammy, the volunteer manager for the nonprofit *Second Chance*. She discussed a disconnect between the “current trend in volunteerism but not enough to do.”

Interestingly when referring to the resources of a firm and CSR, Tammy is one of the few participants who discussed the need for monetary donations versus volunteers.

Collectively, participants recognize the value in philanthropy and the help it can offer while emphasizing the need for a proper fit between the firm and nonprofit because, according to Faith, “not all nonprofits [are] corporate volunteer ready.”

In summary, participants believe that apparel firms have a responsibility to think beyond profits by executing strategies to utilize assets in ways that help to meet the needs of local communities. As revealed through their responses, assets not only include the financial resources of the firm, but also its employees in the form of human capital. Based on this idea, they view the EVP as the framework for good corporate citizenship and a link to the basic obligations a firm has to CSR strategy. As represented in Figure 11, participant responses suggest that a relationship exists between the obligations of business and the needs of the local community. The central idea illustrated by the large gear in the figure represents CSR as the obligation of firms to “do good.” The two smaller gears work concurrently with business obligations. Through the execution of strategy, the firm’s resources are put into action and the final interlocking concept ties together the local orientation of the firm’s initiatives, empowering stakeholders to address

social concerns in communities. Thus, local communities are supported through the obligation of a firm and the actions of its stakeholders.



*Figure 11. Linking CSR to the Community through the EVP*

### **Defining the EVP**

The obligation of a firm to address social problems at home is represented as CSR throughout this study. One facet of CSR is corporate philanthropy, as through the discretionary distribution of assets, a firm can target the needs of local communities. As discussed in Chapter II, an EVP is an organized and planned effort, wherein employees of a firm are encouraged to collectively serve the needs of the local community (Merz, Peloza, & Chen, 2010; Points of Light, 2014). However, the data collected for this dissertation reveal that involvement and commitment levels can vary widely from firm to firm. These differences shape three varying perspectives on EVPs shared by the

participants in this study: (1) *Getting Out There*, (2) *Transferring the Skills for Success*, and (3) *Partnering With a Purpose*. In this section, volunteerism in the form of EVPs is explored via these three perspectives. Through an exploration of the types of programs that the four firms in this study are engaged in, their levels of commitment to CSR, and in turn, to EVPs, can be fully examined.

### **Getting Out There**

Abington first launched its EVP in 1992 to give employees a chance to engage with the local community on company time. What was once considered unconventional in the 1990s has now become the forefront of CSR and employee engagement. Abington continues to be an industry leader, offering its employees 40 paid hours a year to complete volunteer service. I met Edward, Abington's community service manager, when collecting preliminary data for the dissertation. Edward provided insight and perspective on Abington's history and strong focus on service. He defined the firm's annual service events as a time, "when employees worldwide pull on their boots and make a difference." This idea is used as a kind of catch phrase for the firm's service efforts (see Figure 12). He also discussed the various initiatives offered by the firm. For example, twice a year, Abington organizes two global days of service: Earth Day in the spring, and *Serve-Fest* in the fall. Yet, Edward stated that the company does much more than simply these two events. He talked about a 5-year initiative focused on "urban greening," with the firm committing to restoring and creating green spaces in five U.S. cities by 2020. He also mentioned the commitment to help those affected by natural disasters and Abington's

service efforts to rebuild homes. Thus, Abington’s philanthropic efforts extend beyond single day, corporate-driven events.

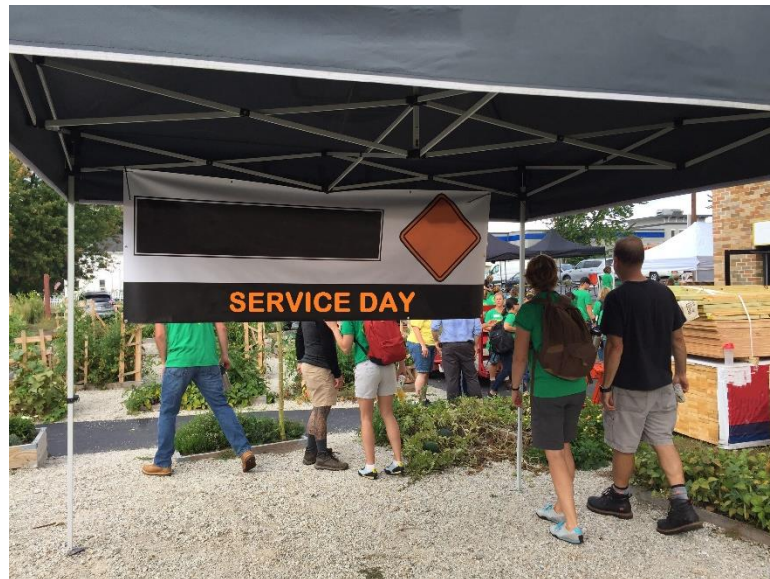


*Figure 12. Preparing for the Day of Service.* (Photo by author)

For the purposes of this dissertation, I observed Abington’s *Serve-Fest* occurring in a New England city, as it was celebrating 25 years of service. As Edward expressed, “We are invading [the city]. We work hand-in-hand with communities, doing good and doing well, to benefit others.” He explained that this particular event is geared towards employees and business partners of Abington’s North American corporate office, which is located in New England. Every year on this day, the North American corporate office closes and employees are bussed to pre-arranged service activities (see Figures 13 and

14). Through conversations in the field, I learned that many employees, ranging from the global brand president to administrative assistants, participate in these annual events.

Edward explained that coffee and snacks are served in the morning and lunch is provided in the afternoon (see Figure 15). For this particular day of service, employees have the option of selecting from one of seven different service projects. To motivate and engage the volunteers, each project begins with a pep rally (see Figure 16). At each event, I observed volunteers being introduced to the nonprofit, as well as its mission, the ways it benefits the community, and the significance of the day's activities.



*Figure 13. Abington 2017 'Serve-Fest. ' (Photo by author)*



*Figure 14. Employees Bussed to the Service Activity. (Photo by author)*



*Figure 15. Community Members and Firm Employees enjoy Lunch Together. (Photo by author)*





*Figure 16. Morning Pep Rally. (Photo by author)*

According to Edward, Abington identifies everyone involved as *volunteers*, because more than 350 employees, local students, business partners, and community members come together with the mission to serve. With community service representing one aspect of the firm's CSR portfolio, each of the seven projects selected had a clear focus on the following pressing community issues within New England: poverty, addiction and recovery, food insecurity, homelessness, and veteran's affairs. As Abington's community service manager for North America, Edward develops the community partnerships for *Serve-Fest* and arranges each volunteer event. He discussed the difficulties of planning large events, stating that "finding sites for so many volunteers to serve can be a challenge." Each site had two project directors, and, due to the size and scope of the event, some had additional project leads. Although EVPs are driven by volunteerism, project directors like Bonnie were specifically asked to lead a project



instead of simply volunteering for the role. When asked how she got involved with the day's activity she explained, "Someone from our CSR department reached out to me and asked me to lead a service project." While project directors were asked to lead and volunteer, they all seemed eager to help. Project size ranged from 25-75 volunteers each. Based on the range of activities offered, I selected three specific events to observe: *Girl Power*, *State Food Bank*, and *Hope for Addicts*. Each event is discussed in turn in the following sections.

#### *Girl Power*

A for-profit firm will often join with a nonprofit to address a social problem identified as important by both (Austin, 2000; Jones, 2010). In the case of this particular firm, investing in young girls who may be facing hardship was identified as a specific need in the local community. As a result, a partnership between Abington and *Girl Power*, a nonprofit based in a New England city, was established. According to communication provided by Abington to all participants about each EVP event and the nonprofits it supports, this particular nonprofit has a mission to "empower girls with the tools to overcome adversity and build the confidence to face current and future life challenges."

The project started at 9:00 in the morning. A total of 55 employees, along with two representatives of the nonprofit, a business partner from a chain of footwear stores, and a restoration expert were on site to complete the tasks at hand. According to Mary, a representative from the nonprofit, "We worked with Abington to identify a need and create a solution." Tasks included: (1) repurpose and deconstruct old pallet stock for

classes held at the nonprofit, (2) cut, prep, and build picnic table and Adirondack chair kits, (3) prepare and create pallet art to be sold to benefit *Girl Power*, (4) clean and clear the overgrown community garden, and (5) clean and paint a new shop space (see Figures 17 and 18). Additionally, the participants also constructed picnic tables, Adirondack chairs, and outdoor classroom items to be donated to two other nonprofits that Abington was supporting on this particular day of service.



*Figure 17. Pallet Deconstruction.* (Photo by author)



*Figure 18. Prepping Picnic Table and Chair Kits. (Photo by author)*

Due to the size and scope of this project, several employees arrived a day early to assist with set-up. One of those individuals was Vanessa, as she was one of two project directors for this site. While walking around the site and talking with her at the start of the day, she described the activities for this particular EVP. In an excerpt from my field notes, I discuss Abington's efforts to plan ahead and think of the potential impact the firm's efforts can have beyond just the day's activities.

I asked Vanessa about the event. She said, '*We wanted to do more than just a day's worth of work.*' She walked me through each activity....then stopped at the pallet art and said, '*Have you met Madeline yet? You need too!*' I responded, '*No.*' She then explained that Abington brought in an expert to help participants create pallet art. She again talked about wanting to do more. Vanessa explained that pallet art is extremely popular and the art is sold at Abington's corporate office to employees. This was not the first time employees created art to be sold. She referenced the art that was created during the Earth Day service event in May to be sold for Mother's Day. She then anticipated the pallet art to be a huge fundraising success for the upcoming holiday season.

According to Vanessa, Abington partnered with Madeline Youseff from HGTV's *Flea Market Flip* to design the pallet art and help the volunteers during the day's event (see Figures 19 – 21). She assisted volunteers with sanding and staining and offered instruction on how to create the art, with several samples provided for the volunteers to view before getting to work. In total, 79 pallet art pieces were created and the proceeds from every piece sold during Abington's vendor fair will be donated to *Girl Power*.

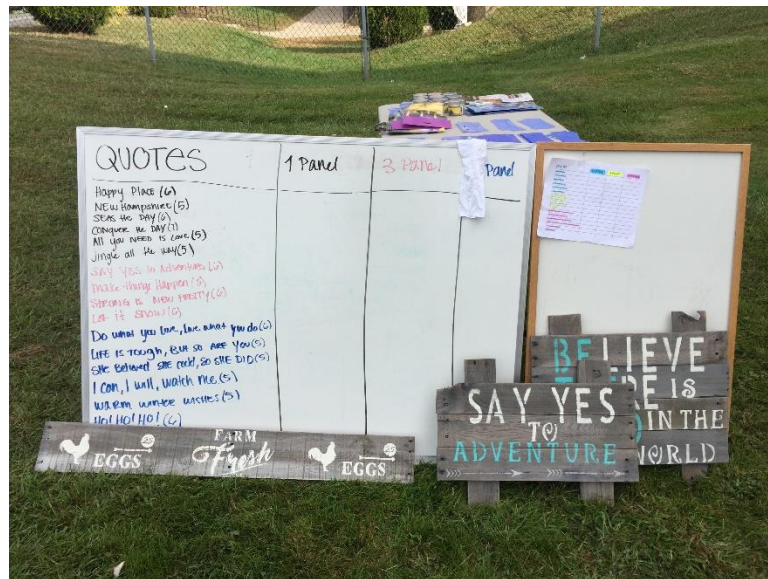


Figure 19. Sample Pallet Art and Quotes. (Photo by author)





*Figure 20. Madeline Youseff of HGTV's 'Flea Market Flip' creating Pallet Art. (Photo by author)*



*Figure 21. Finished Pallet Art sold at Abington's Corporate Office Vendor Fair. (Photo by Madeline Youseff)*

As a project director, Vanessa talked about the time commitment required to plan a large scale service event such as this. When asked about her role in the day's event, she responded, "I co-directed the event, led six team leaders who together led 55 plus volunteers. I helped plan projects, tracked the budget, shopped for materials, and I'm here to motivate the teams." According to an excerpt from my field notes,

Teams were spread out through the grounds, located inside and outside of the space. The project directors walked from group to group, checking-in, asking if anyone needed anything. They did not actively participate. Instead, acting as facilitators ensuring smooth sailing.

As observed, cohesiveness of the teams was key to each successful project on site, and in turn, the positive impact of the firm's particular CSR strategy. Participants were cognizant of such effects, as Heather explained, Abington "avoids writing checks...the best resource is our employees." That is, Abington sees the value in its employees and utilizes this resource to implement CSR actions within local communities.

#### *State Food Bank*

According to representatives from the nonprofit, Abington's retail stores have consistently partnered with the *State Food Bank*. As such, this relationship provides a well-established connection for its *Serve-Fest* annual day of service. Based on information about the nonprofit provided by Abington,

The mission of the *State Food Bank* is to feed hungry people by soliciting and effectively distributing grocery products and perishable foods, and offering innovative programs through a statewide network of approached agencies, by advocating for systemic change; and by educating the public about the nature of, and solution to, problems of hunger.

For this day of service event, in addition to meeting the needs of the food bank's mission to feed individuals facing food insecurities, the nonprofit requested help with exterior beautification of its warehouse facility. Thus, the organized tasks for the day included: (1) beautification through clean-up and landscaping of the surrounding building (see Figure 22) and (2) macaroni and cheese meal packing in conjunction with *Hunger Action Month* (see Figure 23).



*Figure 22. Landscape Beautification.* (Photo by author)



*Figure 23. The 'Mac-Off', Macaroni and Cheese Packing. (Photo by author)*

The food bank coordinated Abington's service efforts with its annual "Mac-Off" Competition in support of *Hunger Action Month*. According to Summer, who is the food bank's volunteer engagement employee, the State's Governor declared September *Hunger Action Month* to highlight food insecurities across the region. As a result, the food bank's "Mac-Off" provides much needed meals to people in the community. In response to the Governor's call to action, the food bank coordinates a competition between for-profit firms throughout the state. The firms compete throughout the month to see which team can pack the most macaroni and cheese in a two hour time period. According to Jasmine, who is the food bank's volunteer coordinator, "Abington was the perfect partner" for this event due to the number of volunteers available to help.



Forty-five volunteers were needed to accomplish the two goals that were set forth by the nonprofit. The volunteers included Abington employees, along with members of a girls' soccer team from a local high school. William works for Abington and volunteers as a varsity soccer coach in the town he lives in. He explained that each year, the girls look forward to taking a day off from school and volunteering. He stated that this was why he has invited them for the past ten years.

Although the goal of the EVP was to provide much needed assistance to the nonprofit, according to Summer, it is also important to provide a deeper understanding of the needs of the community to participants. Thus, the food bank arranged tours for the volunteers throughout the day (see Figure 24). The tours were designed to provide an educational opportunity for observing the scope of operations achieved by the nonprofit. When asked to elaborate on the event, Karen, an Abington employee explained,

The food bank arranged tours throughout the day to give each of the volunteers some insight on the food insecurities in [the state]. We learned that 10% of people in the state are food insecure. I also did not realize how large their facility was or how many people they supported.

Clearly this service event was about more than simply completing a task. Instead, it offered the chance to learn about the needs of others through the experience of the EVP.



*Figure 24. Touring the Food Bank Warehouse. (Photo by author)*

### *Hope for Addicts*

In addition to *Girl Power* and the *State Food Bank*, Abington selected the New England addiction recovery program, *Hope for Addicts*, as its third partner for the day of service. According to a handout provided by Abington, “*Hope for Addicts* brings life changing hope to addicts and their families, offering a residential recovery program for men.” To accomplish the day’s activities, 40 Abington employees worked alongside residents of the recovery program to complete the following tasks: (1) paint the interior of the entire facility, including moving furniture, (2) replace carpeting in the main chapel area, and (3) various housekeeping tasks (see Figures 25 and 26).



*Figure 25. Painting the Kitchen. (Photo by participant)*



*Figure 26. Residents and 'Abington' Employees Working Together to Replace the Carpet in the Chapel Room. (Photo by participant)*

To learn more about the day's activities, William, the project lead, took me on a personal tour of the house and discussed the primary objectives of the EVP. The following excerpt from my field notes illustrates William's perspective on the EVP and the tasks at hand.

We walked up the first stairway in the house. The house was dark and the walls were dirty. Furniture was piled in the center of the rooms in anticipation of the painting projects. William immediately pointed to the missing baseboards in the hallway leading to the resident's living quarters. This was particularly shocking to him and he stated, '*It must be fixed.*' He talked about resolving this issue and sending members of his team to buy coordinating baseboards. Without prompting, he also talked about why this was important to him. He didn't want to leave the residents with an unfinished house. He wanted to provide a cohesive and put-together finished product for the residents, stating, '*I know it's a small detail but hopefully it inspires them [the residents in rehab] to know someone cares.*'

According to William, in addition to the list of home improvement items the team received in advance, there was much more that could be accomplished by the EVP. It was evident that this particular EVP was well planned, with participants willing to go above and beyond when volunteering. William revealed the complexities of this particular project, the time and care put into the tasks at hand, and the need for volunteers to be flexible when completing the job.

As observed throughout the EVP, participants were required to partake in labor-intensive activities, such as moving furniture and ripping out old carpet. In another excerpt from my field notes, I discuss the various techniques used by project leads to encourage and maintain engagement from team members.

To lighten the mood, I observed William and the other project lead playing trivia games with participant volunteers and the residents of the house. After lunch the questions revolved around movie trivia. Volunteers would positively encourage each other to answer the questions by yelling, '*Come on! Come on! You know this!*' If the volunteer answered the question correctly he/she received a ticket, to be exchanged later for a prize.

When I inquired about the questions the project leads were asking the volunteers, William explained the importance of keeping everyone motivated and engaged during the day's events. He stated, "this is not always glamorous....I make it fun with a trivia contest." It appears that based on William's previous experience with EVPs, it is important to add humor while breaking up the monotony of the tasks throughout the day. Although the trivia contest was not the key objective of this particular EVP, it seems the positive reinforcement observed during this event contributed to increased employee engagement.

Aside from improving the visual aesthetics of the home, one of the primary outcomes of this service activity was to have the volunteers spend quality time talking with residents, all of whom are males over the age of 18. Participants appeared to be fully engaged in these conversations. As reflected in a passage from my field notes, at one point, participants were observed talking with a house resident who was a recovering addict:

After lunch, one participant approached a resident and asked him about [the nonprofit] and how it worked. The resident was eager to talk and quickly grabbed a chair. The rest of the participants sat around him at the table. Some moved their seats to get closer. They intently listened and asked questions about how he entered the house, the cost associated with it, and how he can help others in

similar situations. He appeared to enjoy sharing and often said, '*It could happen to anyone.*'

Clearly, participants gained an insider's view into addiction and were able to directly connect to the community members that the EVP was assisting.

Overall, the three Abington EVPs observed in this study appeared to be well received by volunteers. Most of the participants I spoke with seemed genuinely interested in being involved. Abington's EVP is an example of a large-scale philanthropic effort with a high level of engagement by the firm's employees. Yet, not all EVPs observed during data collection were as well organized or detailed in their philanthropic offerings as Abington, as will be discussed in the next section.

### **Transferring the Skills for Success**

As the philanthropic arm of Founders Inc., a foundation was established in 1977 with the mission "to create opportunities for people to own their future and fulfill their personal promise" (Founders Inc., 2018). The motto of the foundation is *Be the Change* and the focus is on community programs in areas that align with Founders Inc.'s business expertise, including advancing women, teens, and young adults, and supporting volunteerism. Today, Founders Inc. is comprised of five independent brands, including Wanderlust and St. Germain, and the motto *Be the Change* guides all of the community-related CSR efforts at Founders Inc. To develop a greater understanding of the foundation's focus and Founders Inc.'s philanthropic strategy, I interviewed George, an employee with direct ties to the foundation, corporate offices, and retail stores in the field. George is a community service manager for St. Germain stores in North America.

He explained that Founders Inc. includes philanthropy as an employment perk through the donation of time and/or money to the community. He described this benefit as one that is important in “Creating possibilities in the communities where we live and work and that it is in our DNA.” It was clear from my conversation with George that the firm is seeking positive change in the communities it does business in.

After one year of employment, all full-time and part-time Founders Inc. employees are eligible to participate in Founders Inc. benefit programs. According to George, “The [philanthropic] programs are a form of incentivized action to build stronger communities.” One such program, *Money for Time*, provides a monetary donation for every 15 hours an employee personally volunteers with an eligible nonprofit. In return for the employees’ volunteer time, Founders Foundation will donate \$150 to the same nonprofit. Another program provided by Founders Foundation is called *Take Five*. This particular initiative allows full-time exempt employees to use up to five “on the clock” hours every month to volunteer. Although these initiatives are designed to promote employee volunteerism and community engagement, interestingly, approximately just half of the firm’s employees participate in them.

For the purposes of this dissertation, one of Founders Inc.’s global sustainability programs called *Field Team Grants* was observed. *Field Team Grants* are the firm’s version of EVPs. To learn more about this program, I spoke with both George and Rita. While George is charged with coordinating volunteer efforts at the national level, Rita is a district manager responsible for engaging St. Germain stores within the New England region. Individually, George and Rita both discussed the *Field Team Grant*’s program

and its benefits. This particular program offers monetary grants for nonprofits based on group employee volunteerism. Specifically, for every 25 hours a store team (consisting of three or more employees), volunteers with an eligible nonprofit (e.g., supporting youth development or women's advancement), the store team can request a \$250 grant for the partner nonprofit organization. To further encourage volunteerism in stores, districts, and regions, Founders Inc. recognizes designated individuals with the title of "Community Leader." Community Leaders are store employees and district managers with a passion for promoting volunteerism. This is not a new job for the employee, but instead an added title with additional leadership responsibilities, aimed at engaging employees in local volunteer activities. These individuals are tasked with optimizing employee engagement in stores and corporate offices. For the purposes of this dissertation, the "Community Leaders" at the district and store-level were the point-of-contact for each EVP observed.

According to Rita, to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Founders Foundation, an internal competition called the *Volunteer Rally* was initiated. It was designed to encourage volunteerism among districts and drive individual store participation. Districts with 100% participation were awarded additional grant money for the nonprofit of their choice. As part of the *Volunteer Rally* and the overall *Field Team Grant* program, specific EVPs held by St. Germain and Wanderlust were selected for data collection. This decision was largely based on the strong commitment to volunteerism and established partnerships that these two firms have developed with area nonprofits. It should be noted, that while Founders Inc. and its foundation have strong and well-developed EVPs, employee participation levels are not as high as those of the firm discussed in the



previous section of this chapter. For example, according to Rita, with two weeks remaining in the *Volunteer Rally*, only 43% of St. Germain stores in the U.S. participated in some form of team volunteerism. The foundation set a goal of 80% participation from each district. She said district managers were encouraged to “nudge stores” because “we can be at 100% participation.” The following specific nonprofits were observed and each EVP will be discussed in turn in this section: (1) *Second Chance*, (2) *BMSA Seacoast*, and (3) *Cancer Walk Foundation*.

### *Second Chance*

A philanthropic relationship between a firm and a nonprofit can help develop deeper connections between them (Austin, 2000). As such, a firm may seek to support a particular nonprofit that its target market cares about. Thus, in line with Founders Inc.’s initiative of advancing women, *Second Chance* is often chosen as a nonprofit partner by Founders Inc.’s brands, including Wanderlust and St. Germain. Indeed, according to Tammy, the volunteer manager for *Second Chance*, the nonprofit is committed to “empowering women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.” To fulfill a team grant, eight employees from two different New England-based Wanderlust stores volunteered to set up for the *Second Chance* “Semi-Annual Sale.” Additionally, one *Second Chance* employee and four associates from a local investment bank helped prepare for this sale event.

Twice a year, the nonprofit provides a pop-up shop and sale event allowing clients of the nonprofit the opportunity to shop donated clothing at a discounted price. Tasks for

the day included transporting merchandise from the warehouse to the selling space, placement and sizing of apparel and accessories, as well as steaming the donated clothing (see Figures 27 and 28). Volunteers were assigned tasks by Destiny, a *Second Chance* employee. Unlike the EVPs discussed in the previous section, background information on the nonprofit or the needs of the organization was not provided to volunteers. Participants arrived at the site and were immediately given a task to work on.



*Figure 27. Sorting and Sizing Donated Apparel. (Photo by author)*



*Figure 28. Organizing Donated Shoes by Size and Color. (Photo by author)*

Chris, the store community leader for the event, is an Associate Manager at one of the local Wanderlust stores. He has volunteered with *Second Chance* for the past several years and introduced the nonprofit to his coworkers. The local Wanderlust stores now visit *Second Chance* on a bi-annual basis to help prep for the “Semi-Annual Sale,” providing a good example of how a relationship between a firm and a nonprofit can be cultivated through the activities of an EVP. According to Chris, helping with the “Semi-Annual Sale” is now a bi-annual, multi-day volunteering event for the New England-area Wanderlust stores.

Volunteers for this particular event often spoke of the opportunity to utilize their job skills to help others. That is, when asked why this event was chosen, Ellie, a store

manager for Wanderlust stated, “It allows us to use our job skills to give back. I chose this particular activity for my team.” According to Ellie, she saw this particular EVP as an opportunity for her team to utilize their merchandising expertise while helping others. Additionally, in an excerpt from my field notes, Jeremiah revealed a similar connection between his volunteer tasks and his job duties as a retail manager:

Along with myself, two volunteers from Wanderlust and two volunteers from the bank, we were tasked with setting up the shoe tables. Jeremiah appears to enjoy the task. I observed him talking about offering the right assortment of product for the ladies coming to shop the sale. He was meticulous when checking for sizes, heel height, and color offering. He stated that he ‘*wanted to offer something for every customer.*’ I observed him discussing the similarities between placing the shoes on the table and ‘setting a wall’ for his customers to shop when working at Wanderlust. He also quickly became the leader of this activity. He did this by directing and offering suggestions to the volunteers working on the same tasks.

In addition to arranging shoes, participants sorted and sized apparel. When placing the garments on the racks, I observed a few of the volunteers discussing “outfits.” These particular volunteers would group apparel into coordinating styles, saying that it was “easier to shop” when set up this particular way. Additionally, when participants were asked if the EVP aligned with their skill sets, almost all responded, “Strongly agree.” Clearly, in the case of this EVP, participants sought ways to utilize their job skills to help the nonprofit and benefit the particular community members it serves.

Participants chose the day and time to volunteer based on individual work schedules and were paid for their time by the firm, as it was part of their scheduled work shifts. However, it was observed that only full-time employees attended this specific event. I overheard the two store managers present at this EVP discussing their combined

staff of over 100 employees, yet only eight employees volunteered on this particular day. When asked about store participation and employee volunteerism, one of the store managers, Ava, responded that, “I like to be able to ask my entire team to join. It doesn’t always work out that way.” Clearly, employees are given the opportunity but not forced to participate. Upon completion of the day’s tasks, *Second Chance* provided free pizza and soda, to thank the volunteers for their time

#### *BMSA Seacoast*

As discussed by participants, Founders Inc. and Founders Foundation are both committed to advancing the job skills of young adults. According to Nicole, this commitment aligns with *BMSA Seacoast*’s mission to “strengthen communities through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility, regardless of age, income, or background.” To support Founders Inc.’s mission of advancing low-income youth with their first job, St. Germain created the *Go!* platform. *Go!* is designed to “empower the next generation with the real-world skills, training, and job opportunities to make a difference in communities and with a bright future” (Be the Change, 2018). According to Rita, the area District Manager for St. Germain stores, the experiences associated with the *Go!* program, “gets these kids introduced to the workforce early” with the hopes of creating positive change and building stronger communities

Eight employee volunteers from two stores within the district participated in the activity, along with four youth ages 16-17 from the *BMSA*’s Counselor-in-Training program, and the Counselor-in-Training director. The *BMSA* provided transportation and brought the youth to a local St. Germain store via school bus. The event was held during

store hours and on a Wednesday morning, when customer traffic was at a minimum. This allowed the employee volunteers time to focus on the youth. Some of the employees were scheduled to work that particular day and others came in to volunteer on their day off. The day started with an introduction to the store and a brief overview of the day's activities, which focused on preparing the youth for possible jobs in retail. The activities include how to interview, how to dress professionally on a budget, merchandising and pricing (see Figure 29), and how to run a point-of-sale system (i.e. a cash register). During the event, each young adult visited a "station," learning an activity from experienced St. Germain employee volunteers.



*Figure 29. Learning Merchandising and Pricing Techniques.* (Photo by Author)

Based on my observations, employee participants from St. Germain seemed excited to be part of the in-store volunteer activity and, similar to the responses from

participants of the *Second Chance* event, they were interested in using their job skills to help others. For example, Beth stated,

I wanted to show the people about what I do behind the scenes at St. Germain to help them better understand the hard work that goes into every day. We did this to get them interested in applying for a job at St. Germain.

It is evident from Beth's statement that the EVP supports the mission of the firm and Founders Foundation, by providing young adults the skills necessary to apply for and acquire their first job. Yet, the EVP can offer more than job skills. David was tasked with teaching the youth how to shop for work attire on a budget. During this activity, David's instructions to the teenagers moved beyond shopping for something to wear on the interview, to making smart choices by saving money when shopping. David said,

Look at price and work hard to gain success. Look for sales and don't be afraid to use coupons or ask for them. Utilize what is out and available. \$15 off pants equals 2 McDonald's meals. That's your lunch break here.

David saw the EVP as an opportunity to further advance life-skills, such as budgeting, to the young adults. With enthusiasm, David discussed the importance of saving money when shopping. He talked about using coupons and how the money saved could translate into meals for a couple of lunch breaks. He related the scenario to his personal experience of shopping and using coupons while working at St. Germain, with the hopes of helping the youth make the same smart decisions. Obviously, the EVP is as much about highlighting the importance of job skills as it is about developing life skills, and the potential to recruit future store employees.

It is important to fully understand the partnership between stores and the community. In a discussion with Rita, she outlined and further explained the *Go!* program as St. Germain's commitment to philanthropy and the importance of empowering the next generation with real-world skills. As part of the *Go!* program, St. Germain stores can choose to participate in *Go! on the Job*, the brand's signature, in-store job shadowing program that introduces young adults to the skills required for a career in the retail industry. She said, "The program provides hands-on opportunities for youth ages 15-18 in how to display merchandise, manage a stock room, run the cash register and provide customer service." Rita explained that, for this reason, St. Germain stores partner with nonprofits that are focused on youth empowerment, such as the *YMCA* or *Boys and Girls Clubs of America*. Clearly, St. Germain's EVP has a strategic focus, offering volunteers the opportunity to share their on-the-job expertise while engaging with young adults in the hopes of strengthening the local community through employment opportunity.

#### *Cancer Walk Foundation*

Alongside a focus on youth, another way that Founders Inc. creates opportunities to better the local community is by advancing issues important to women. One such way is by impacting women's health initiatives such as heart disease and breast cancer prevention. As a result, St. Germain stores from New England chose to support a nonprofit aimed at providing awareness and services for those affected by breast cancer. According to Amy, a representative of the *Cancer Walk Foundation*, the nonprofit is "dedicated to providing free services to individuals and families touched by cancer in the



communities of southern New England.” She further explained that the “*Cancer Walk Run/Walk Series* is held annually in a southern New England city to kick off Breast Cancer Awareness month and ninety percent of the funds raised from this particular fundraiser supports education, wellness resources, and survivorship programs.”

For this particular event, I observed St. Germain employees volunteering at a 5K run/walk race. The race included three components: Kid Fun Run, Pink Pump Parade (see Figure 30), and the 5K run/walk race. Rita is St. Germain’s District Community Leader and is quite passionate about this event. She insisted that I join the St. Germain team to volunteer. She said, “Every year stores in the district join together to volunteer time for this fundraising event.” This year, managers and sales associates from eight different stores volunteered for the event. It was evident that volunteering together is important to Rita and she wanted me to experience the camaraderie she feels when volunteering with her team of employees. When asked why volunteering is important, she replied, “A store that volunteers together stays together.” Clearly, Rita views the EVP as an integral component to employee engagement and job retention among her store teams.



*Figure 30. Pink Pump Parade Participants. (Photo by Author)*

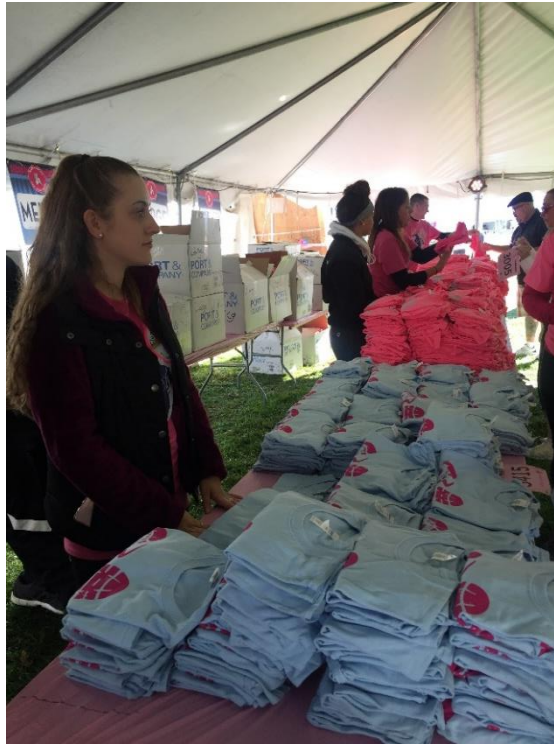
Unfortunately, of the 45 individuals who were scheduled to volunteer, only 25 actually showed up to participate. Of the employees present at the event, some brought friends and family to volunteer, including Crystal, who brought her boyfriend. She said, “I thought it’d be fun.” All participants were unpaid, however, everyone was given a free *Cancer Walk* t-shirt to wear during the event. Additionally, some participants, like Wendy, were given the day off to encourage participation, “My manager asked me at the last minute. She gave me off for today and I didn’t ask for it, so I figured, why not help.” Volunteers were tasked with various activities assigned by event volunteers, including registration, bib number pick-up, and t-shirt pick up (see Figures 31 – 33).



*Figure 31. Registering Runners for the Race. (Photo by Author)*



*Figure 32. Assigning Bib Numbers to Race Participants. (Photo by Author)*



*Figure 33. T-shirts provided for Race Participants. (Photo by Author)*

I observed that the volunteers were familiar with the nonprofit and the event, but did not necessarily know what they would be doing until the day of the event. Most arrived at the site approximately two hours before the race began. I observed that this allowed time for employees as volunteers to socialize and to do so outside of the workplace (see Figures 34 – 36). During this time, a couple of volunteers danced while others enjoyed quiet conversations. Likewise, some participants, such as Trinity, discussed the personal benefits of participating in an EVP. She stated, “volunteering is as much about helping as it is about bonding between the associates.” Interestingly, once the crowds arrived, I overheard participants discuss the similarities between the volunteer activities they were assigned and their daily work-life; including greeting people, line

management, and replenishment of items such as t-shirts. Much like with the other two Founders Inc. EVPs that I observed, participants engaged in volunteer activities that utilized their current job skills as retail employees.



*Figure 34. Dancing before the Race Begins. (Photo by Author)*





*Figure 35. Co-workers engaging in Conversation before the Race. (Photo by Author)*



*Figure 36. Bonding between Employees. (Photo by Author)*

Overall, I observed the Founders Inc. employees that participated in the EVPs to be passionate about volunteering and interested in supporting the community. They also

seemed to genuinely enjoy the time spent together. While Founders Inc. has a clearly-defined EVP focus, it appears that implementation happens at the store and district levels, making for a “grassroots” effort. I also noticed that volunteer participation levels varied from location to location. Although Founders Inc. offers three strategic foci for its philanthropic efforts (i.e., youth empowerment, advancement of women, and employee volunteerism) not all of its EVPs observed in this study revealed the same approach. The next section explores EVPs that are in the nascent stages, and have yet to link the level of commitment of volunteer initiatives to clearly defined objectives of the firm’s philanthropic strategy.

### **Partnering With a Purpose**

RGM Corporation (RGM) is an apparel conglomerate comprised of over 30 brands with its corporate office located in a Southeastern city in the US. It is also the parent company of aforementioned Abington. With its various brands located across the country, RGM encourages its employees to volunteer in the cities they work in. However, it became clear from the interpretation of data that RGM’s community engagement and EVP opportunities vary greatly between the corporate offices and its many individual brands. When asked about the firm’s volunteer initiatives, Rose, a human resources associate at RGM talked about the firm’s commitment to philanthropy and supporting the local community. She said, “[the firm] encourages and empowers associates to get involved in service opportunities in the communities where they live, work and play.” Indeed, RGM strongly believes that an actively engaged local citizen is good for both the community and business (RGM Corporation, 2018) and for this reason, employees give

their time and experience to volunteer in the local community that they work in. Yet, I noted that aside from supporting the *Community Chest*, a national nonprofit focused on fundraising and meeting the general needs of the community, the execution of such efforts seemed to lack focus as compared to the other firms observed in this study.

To meet the philanthropic mission of the firm and encourage employee engagement, RGM offers bi-annual service events to employees at its corporate headquarters and at one of its local denim brands. The first day of service usually occurs in May, in honor of Earth Day, when the sustainability division of the firm arranges community volunteering events around the state. The next event, *RGM Week*, occurs every September in conjunction with the *Community Chest*, and is a three-day event comprised of projects and activities that serve a range of nonprofits in the community. This particular event is hosted by RGM's human resources department. As an associate in the human resources department, Rose appears to be quite passionate about *RGM Week*. She calls it the "Fabric of our Community." She explained that multiple forms of philanthropy are encouraged during this time, as employees are urged to financially donate to the *Community Chest*, with RGM Foundation matching all gifts. Additionally, in conjunction with the *Community Chest*, a total of 375 volunteer spots were made available for 11 different volunteer projects on and off-site throughout the city. According to Rose, these events are designed to address "...community needs and to give back," yet, specific needs such as poverty, youth empowerment, and food insecurities were not discussed. Based on the need to observe a variety of activities for this study,



Rose recommended four EVPs for observation: (1) *BMSA Camp*, (2) *No-sew Bags for the Homeless*, (3) *City Volunteer Center*, and (4) *Waterways Clean-up*.

In conjunction with *RGM Week*, for a few hours during their regular work day employees are offered the opportunity to volunteer for the EVP of their choice.

According to Rose, each event includes one team lead who coordinates the activities and select number of volunteers. To encourage participation, employees are offered free movie tickets and a t-shirt for their efforts. However, I overheard some participants complaining about not receiving their tickets and it appeared that overall employee participation was lacking. Each activity observed is discussed in detail in the following sections.

#### *BMSA Camp*

*BMSA Camp* is a resident camp for local youth. Meredith, an outdoor education instructor for the camp, talked about the mission of the nonprofit. She said, “*BMSA Camp* is designed to provide a camp experience that results in increased self-confidence to take on the challenges of life and school.” To provide a better understanding of the partnership between the *BMSA* and the *Community Chest*, one of the participant volunteers, Amelia, discussed the ways in which the nonprofits work together. In an excerpt from my field notes, Amelia described how the *Community Chest* pays for underserved youth to attend the camp, offering insight into why this activity was chosen.

Amelia seemed to think the experience of attending camp was important. She explained that anyone can attend the camp offered by the *BMSA* and the cost is off-set by the *Community Chest*. She explained that this makes camp affordable to

all. She explained that this was why the activity was chosen. She stated, it's important to support the nonprofits affiliated with the *Community Chest*.

As such, it appears that the *Community Chest's* community partnerships are important to the firm and its philanthropic mission.

Amelia also discussed the size and scope of this particular activity, explaining that she was one of two employees that were chosen to lead this project, with a total of 25 employee volunteers working together to complete the tasks designated by the *BMSA Camp*. The tasks included: (1) staining picnic tables and benches, (2) gardening (see Figure 37), (3) cleaning up downed limbs and trees, and (4) splitting fire wood with a hydraulic splitter. Volunteers were divided into four smaller groups and located throughout the *BMSA* facility and campgrounds to accomplish each task at hand.



*Figure 37. Clearing Overgrown Gardens.* (Photo by author)

As one of the project directors, Amelia assisted with the gardening activities. Due to the size of the facility, and the need for a golf cart to move from location to location, I decided to remain in the garden and did not get the opportunity to meet the other project director or volunteers. Amelia seemed eager to discuss the philanthropic focus of the firm and the efforts to encourage employee engagement through empowerment of choice. An excerpt from my field notes reveals a concerted effort to align CSR-related initiatives among all brands in the corporation, while maintaining autonomy of action among individual employees.

Amelia talked about volunteerism as ‘purpose work.’ She said it’s ‘how people define their purpose.’ Adding that the foundation was shifting its focus, allowing employees to choose their purpose versus the firm dictating action. The goal is to ‘move efforts forward and see more change.’ She also talked about the various brands under the RGM umbrella and how it is important to ‘sustain and anchor an active lifestyle’ based on each brand. She said it’s a form of employee relations with an engagement budget from HR.

That is, according to Amelia, it is important for the firm and its stakeholders to represent a unified image of purpose and values in its philanthropic efforts by reflecting the active lifestyle of the firm, all while serving the people and causes that matter most to them.

Later in our conversation, she compared the activities at the *BMSA Camp* to her personal passion of helping children, along with the ability to enjoy the outdoors while helping others in the local community.

On site, I observed participants pulling weeds, trimming bushes, mowing the grass, and fixing wooden structures. A total of 14 RGM employees were present in the gardens, along with three *BMSA* staff members. The *BMSA* staff members did not interact

with the volunteers and volunteers worked either alone or in groups of two. This activity started at 9am and by 9:30am a few participants were sitting in the shade drinking water. While many participants stated that they enjoyed being outside, those sitting in the shade did not offer an explanation, as illustrated in an excerpt from my field notes,

It is still early in the morning and a few participants discussed the ‘perfect weather’ to be outside volunteering. It is a mixed group of employees who do not seem to know each other. This seems to cause some segregation among participants. Participants are mainly working in pairs, except for one guy mowing the lawn in the distance. At this point, there are two participants not working. They are sitting on the porch of one of the cabins, in the shade, drinking bottled water.

After recording my observations, I approached the individuals on the porch and asked why they chose to participate in this EVP. One participant replied by stating that he was only there because his team was there. In the same vein, the other participant said, “My team was going.” Both individuals were not interested in discussing anything else and actually turned away from me. It appears that while peer-pressure motivated these individuals to attend the EVP event, it did not encourage participation while onsite.

Next, I approached two pairs of volunteers that were clearing weeds near a wooden trellis (see Figure 38). One pair remarked on the enjoyment of being outside and working with nature. The other commented on the purpose of the day’s event stating that they did not understand why the activity was chosen. Additionally, several individuals mentioned that they were “voluntold” to participate. That is, their participation was coerced by coworkers or supervisors, by “encouraging” peers to attend the EVP event. Moreover, one participant commented that, “The CEO and presidents are not on site this

year due to ‘changes in leadership’.” In contrast to Amelia’s previous statements on purpose, the comments and behaviors of some volunteers at this event revealed inconsistencies between the purpose of volunteering and the requirement to do so. When compared to the camaraderie and engagement that I observed among employees at events organized by the other three firms in this study, this event clearly lacked enthusiasm, and as a result, was a missed opportunity for the firm, its employees, and the BMSA.

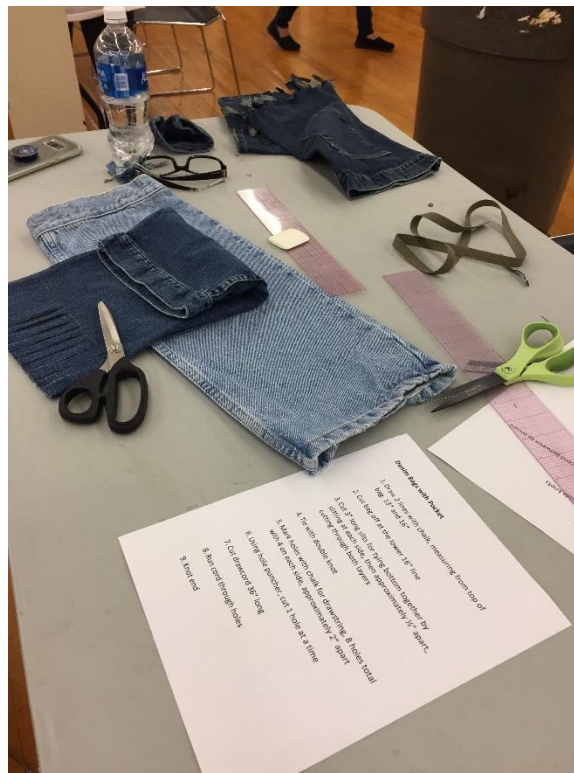


*Figure 38. Clearing Weeds.* (Photo by Author)

### *No-Sew Bags for the Homeless*

The second EVP I observed was an attempt by the firm to increase employee engagement in the volunteer opportunities offered. For this event, RGM Denim created an onsite EVP activity involving repurposing scraps of denim. A pattern-maker designed a bag to hold toiletries for homeless women. In order to accommodate the skills of all employees, the bag was designed to be a no-sew item (see Figures 39 – 41). One of the

participants who is also a manager at the RGM production facility, Sophia, discussed the ease of the project and the positive environmental impact through the onsite reuse of materials. She stated, “Recycled denim scraps, scissors, and discarded trim are the only tools needed.” For this event, employees were able to stop by a work room between the hours of 9am and noon to work on as many or as few bags as they liked. Employees were not required to participate and attendance was not taken, however 25 individuals signed up to participate in this particular activity.



*Figure 39. Instructions and Tools to Create the Denim No-Sew Bags. (Photo by author)*





*Figure 40. Volunteers making the Denim No-Sew Bags. (Photo by author)*



*Figure 41. Completed No-Sew Denim Bags. (Photo by author)*

It was immediately obvious to me that participants enjoyed the convenience of this particular service project. For example, Debra, a patternmaker at the firm, discussed how the activity is “something we can do.” Others stated that by providing activities onsite there is “something for everyone,” and that there is “always something going on” when asked about philanthropic efforts provided by the firm. As illustrated in an excerpt from my field notes, the enthusiasm among the participants was evident.

I arrived after the event started but was greeted with a warm welcome. Nine participants were seated in groups of two or three at long tables and all talked while working. The room resembled an old gymnasium with a wood floor, tall ceiling, and fluorescent lights. With everyone sewing, I felt like I was back in high school in a home economics class. Right away, I was encouraged to sit down and get to work. Several of the participants took time to show me how to make a bag. While I worked on my bag, the other participants continued to talk to each other. The two women at my table discussed the colleges they attended and how they started working for RGM. When I finished creating my bag, I asked the project leader Sophia where this idea came from. She talked about all of the extra fabric onsite and how they are always brainstorming uses for it. Then she held up the bag and decided it looked like the stocking. She looked at the other participants and said they should do this again for Christmas and donate stockings filled with goodies for the Holidays. Everyone present thought this was a good idea, they were encouraging and supportive. It made me want to work there and be part of their team.

As compared to the *BMSA Camp* volunteer event, it appears this event was enjoyed by everyone present. It provided an opportunity for participants to get to know each other and enjoy time away from their “desks,” while offering the convenience of remaining in the building they work in to complete a service activity.

At the end of the day, a total of 24 employees participated, with most stopping by to complete a few bags and then returning to work. A total of 148 bags were created. At



the time of the event, participants were not aware of the recipients of the bags, simply that they were going to help someone in need. However, after the event, I continued to follow-up with the project director, Sophia. According to her, a couple of months later and in time for the Christmas holiday, the bags were filled with shampoos, soaps, toothbrushes, and socks and distributed to five different area shelters. She shared a photograph of the bags being delivered (see Figure 42). Although this EVP sought to meet a need in the local community by providing toiletries to the area shelters, the connection between empowering engagement through purpose and the push towards an active lifestyle was lacking for this particular EVP. Thus, there does seem to be a disconnect between RGM's philanthropic mission and the engagement activities offered to its employees.



*Figure 42. Delivering the No-Sew Bags filled with Toiletries. (Photo by participant)*

### *City Volunteer Center*

As revealed earlier in this section, an important aspect of *RGM Week* is the firm's partnership with the *Community Chest*. According to Angela, a campaign associate for the *Community Chest*, the nonprofit, "fights for the opportunity, prosperity and future of every person in the city." To meet the needs of the firm and the local community, the *Community Chest* partnered with the *City Volunteer Center*. According to Faith, a director at the *City Volunteer Center*, the nonprofit's mission is to, "strengthen the community by creating meaningful volunteer connections. The center works to connect people, promote volunteerism, support nonprofits, and build partnerships." Together, the nonprofits chose to focus on picking up trash from a section of Martin Luther King Jr.

Drive (see Figures 43 and 44). The *City Volunteer Center* sponsors this section of the road, located in a lower income and underserved area of the city.

This project actively engaged 12 employee volunteers from RGM Corporation. All of the volunteers worked together and knew each other. In addition to the employee volunteers, a representative from the *City Volunteer Center* and two college-student volunteers from the *Community Chest* helped on the project. This event was designed to be a shorter, after-lunch activity, however, as I observed, the task was not as easy as expected and took longer than anticipated due to the hot afternoon sun slowing down some of the participants. Before the activity started, Faith provided project guidelines and gave all of the volunteers an orange vest, trash bags, and gloves. Volunteers were split into two groups of eight. This seemed to fuel a competitive spirit between the teams before the activity began.



*Figure 43. Volunteers Picking up Trash along the Road. (Photo by author)*



*Figure 44. Volunteers Finish Collecting Trash. (Photo by author)*

Sam was the team lead on this event and chose this project due to a personal connection with the community. He was eager to share the importance of this event with me, but I did not observe him discussing his personal story with others. I observed most of the volunteers picking up trash on their own, or in groups of two. However, I also noticed that there was one individual who talked on his cell phone during the entire event, collecting very little trash along the route and missing the opportunity to engage with co-workers and/or community members.

I observed this activity to be fairly well organized. Faith, the representative from the *City Volunteer Center* gave participants explicit instructions, including to wear gloves at all times and remain on the sidewalk. She also explained that most of the trash was not from the residents but from the automobile traffic on the street. She provided an educational aspect to the activity, informing participants that cigarette butts are the most

commonly discarded piece of waste worldwide and are not biodegradable. She also encouraged everyone to volunteer in the future and partner with the *City Volunteer Center* for possible opportunities in the area.

At the end of the event, one of the two teams posed for a group picture to celebrate its accomplishments (see Figure 45). The following excerpt from my field notes illustrates that most participants could see a noticeable difference thanks to their efforts. However, the heat of the day was clearly exhausting and discouraged some from wanting to participate again.

Once we reached the MLK landmark, everyone was looking for a place to rest. We were excited to leave the collected trash for pick-up and drink some water. The female participants discussed enjoying the activity and wanted to do it again. They mentioned some of the residents thanking them along the way and being able to see a difference in the appearance of the sidewalk. The men did not talk much, but the individual on his Bluetooth phone finally finished his phone conversation. It was a group consensus that if we volunteered again, it would be during cooler weather and not after lunch during the peak heat time of the day. I don't know what the temperature was but my t-shirt was drenched, as were others, it was hot and humid.

Overall, it was a fairly effective EVP and this seemed largely due to the leadership of Faith. She sought to make sure that participants learned of the needs of the community and had first-hand experience with an area of the city that some had never been to. Although many participants mentioned the weather, it is an uncontrollable factor in an outdoor EVP activity, and in this case, did not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of most participants.



*Figure 45. A Sense of Accomplishment among Volunteers. (Photo by participant)*

#### *Waterways Clean-up*

Based on the interpretation of the data collected for this dissertation, it is clear that employees will often seek volunteer opportunities that suit their individual interests. Thus, in line with RGM's many outdoor lifestyle brands, participants sought opportunities to get outside and positively impact the environment through their volunteer efforts. An opportunity that therefore sounded interesting to some participants was a waterway clean-up on the campus of a local university.

The city that hosted this event developed a grassroots volunteerism campaign to educate residents and prevent pollutants from harming the water supply by placing drain markers on the concrete covers of storm drains. The stickers read: "Don't Dump – Drains to Lakes and Creeks!" (see Figure 46). This was the first time this volunteer activity was offered by RGM. This particular EVP activity was selected by the firm to draw



awareness to the needs of the local community. According to participant volunteer Layla, “There is a lack of awareness of the fact that storm drains lead directly to lakes and streams.” Compared to the other EVP activities observed during *RGM Week*, this particular event had only eight employee participants and they split up into four groups of two. As a result, the employees were isolated from each other and did not interact until the end. I chose to join Layla and Jeanine, both new RGM employees.



*Figure 46. Placing a ‘No Dumping’ Sticker on the Drain. (Photo by author)*

Regrettably, participants who signed up for this activity were left unaware of the details of project until the day of the event. For example, when we were walking around the campus Jeanine, stated, “I don't really know why RGM chose this activity. No one in my group actually knew what we were doing until we got to the [college] campus.” I overheard participants voice confusion about the task, with many stating that they thought it would be a different kind of activity, one that directly involved cleaning up waterways. Instead, it involved placing stickers on storm drains with no direct correlation

to a nonprofit and, unlike the roadway clean-up activity, the event lacked a representative from the city. Thus, there was no way to educate individuals on the purpose of the activity. Consequently, participants voiced concern over the value of this activity, with Jeanine declaring, “I do not think this was a productive use of my time because I highly doubt a little sign on the ground will prevent waste from being thrown into waterways.” Clearly, additional communication about the tasks at hand and an educational component would have been conducive to achieving a greater sense of engagement, and perhaps even satisfaction, from the volunteer activity.

Although it seems that RGM is making a concerted effort to engage its employees in the local community and to encourage volunteerism, there is clearly room for improvement, particularly that the focus of each event be clearly defined and aligned with firm initiatives. Moreover, to create sustainable change, increasing employee engagement with the community is also needed. RGM can learn from its own brand, Abington, in terms of implementation and engagement in EVP events, and in turn, achieve greater impact within the local community through the EVPs.

In summary, this chapter explored the data for the different types of EVPs in order to provide a foundation for understanding philanthropy as CSR, specifically through firm-led volunteerism. The data collected for this study offers insight into corporate philanthropy, and the ways that investing employee time and effort as a firm resource is an approach to CSR that can be effective in helping the needs of local communities. However, as the interpretation clearly illustrates, firms vary in their levels of CSR commitment and EVP expertise. In one case, the firm offers EVP events for all



stakeholders by organizing opportunities for volunteers to learn how they can make a difference. In another, EVPs allow volunteers to use their skills to help those in need. Yet another sheds light on why it is important to develop an EVP purpose that is aligned with firm values. Thus, this chapter illustrates how not all EVPs are created equal and not all employees participate to the same extent. To address the reasons for the latter, in the next chapter, the employee perspective of EVP participation is examined in more depth.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the EVP as a form of CSR was discussed, revealing why the EVP is important and how it functions as a form of corporate philanthropy. This dissertation served as a basis for understanding the values of CSR across firms as well as the EVP as a particular CSR strategy. In the next chapter, the employee perspective on EVP participation is examined.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **THEMATIC INTERPRETATION PART II, THE EVP AS CSR: THE EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE**

As discussed in Chapter I, CSR has significance not only for a firm's bottom line, but for all of its various stakeholders as well (Lacey & Kennett-Hensel, 2010). In this chapter, I present the second part of the thematic interpretation: *The Employee Perspective*. Reasons why employees participate in an EVP are multiple and varied, as are reasons why they may not participate. As revealed in Chapter IV, EVPs have the potential to provide value to the employee, the community, and the firm. It is also important to know why employees engage in EVP activities. To this end, the following chapter offers an interpretation of the data via four thematic areas: (1) *What's In It for Me? Weighing the Benefits versus Costs*, (2) *Paying it Forward by Giving Back: Addressing Community Needs*, (3) *The Group Effect: Bonding Opportunity or Peer Pressure?* and (4) *The Firm and I: Corporate Culture and EVP Expectations*.

#### **What's In It for Me? Weighing the Benefits versus Costs**

When it comes to CSR, stakeholders are integral to the implementation of a firm's initiatives. In the case of EVPs, it is primarily the employee as a stakeholder who participates, and in doing so, helps to implement the firm's CSR-related strategy. Data collected for this study reveal a process of decision-making that occurs among participants regarding EVP engagement. Although other stakeholders may participate, the

employee perspective is explored here particularly in-depth. In this section, the way participants weighed the costs versus benefits of the EVP are thoroughly examined. Three subthemes are used to explore this issue: (1) *Convenience*, (2) *Personal Satisfaction*, and (3) *Connecting with Others*.

### **Convenience**

As discussed in the previous chapter, firms often dictate the EVP options available to employees. The options, such as building homes or packing lunches, usually align the focus of an EVP with the firm's particular CSR initiatives. In the case of the four firms in this study, employees were given a list of potential volunteer activities to choose from. The extent to which the choices were convenient surfaced as the primary motivation for employees seeking to participate in an EVP. For example, Madelyn pointed to the ease of participating in an EVP event by stating, "Not everyone has the time inside or outside of work to volunteer." Specifically, convenience means accessibility and suitability of the EVP.

As an important facet of convenience, location of the EVP appears to be one of the deciding factors among participants. When asked why she chose to volunteer at a particular event, Olivia explained, "It was on a list provided by our employer." She went on to explain that the main reason for her choice was based on location, stating, "I chose it because it was convenient for me." For this project, Olivia was able to stay in her office while participating in a project benefiting homeless women. Thus, ease of location benefitted Olivia, as she did not have to spend additional time out of her day commuting to a project. Location was an appealing factor for Carla as well, who stated,

I was looking to do something that was indoor and a little more flexible on time and closer to the office... something different than what I've done in the past. I always try to work on some event whenever we have these volunteer days.

Carla wanted to be involved with an EVP activity but, at the same time, sought to ensure that it had little impact on her job performance. As with Carla and Olivia, work schedule often seemed to dictate participants' ability to participate in an EVP. When discussing her motivation to participate in her employer's annual EVP events, Leslie explained, "Our department always does one event each year...and I wanted to do this one because it was an activity in our own building." Clearly, it is important for some participants to have the option to participate in an EVP, but to do so without having to leave the office.

Interestingly, it should be noted that when discussing the different events offered by a firm, one participant did not agree with volunteering made easy, stating, "...it's [the EVP] an excuse to get out of the office. Pansies stayed in the office." Clearly, participants have differing ideas about what should be required for EVP participation. That is, participants place different values on the benefits of staying versus leaving the workplace to help others.

While the accessibility of staying in place was enticing to some participants, others seemed to appreciate a change in location and enjoyed the chance to leave the office. For example, when asked why he chose the *BMSA Camp* as his EVP event, Chuck simply stated, "...to get outside...work with nature and exercise." Madelyn, who also volunteered at the *BMSA* campgrounds, agreed, "Outside is great, and the weather was great." It appears that some participants enjoy a change in scenery for the EVP, as for

them, the chance to get out of the office for a portion of their workday is a deciding factor.

As observational and interview data confirm, some participants enjoy being outside and engaging in manual labor. However, other participants elect an activities based on the lack of physical prowess necessary. That is, for them, the overall ease of the task is a deciding factor in the choice of an EVP event. For example, Zoe enjoyed the in-office creation of denim bags for the homeless. She explained that the activity is “not as physical” and that this was the reason for her decision. Likewise, Chris volunteered to set up a retail store for *Second Chance*. He related the activity to his everyday job of working in retail, stating “It is easy work.” Based on these responses, it appears that firms should offer employees the option to address various interests and engagement levels when choosing EVP activities.

Participants also benefitted from engaging in activities of personal enjoyment. Thus, the convenience of the activity was also tied to the nature of the task. While some enjoyed the type of work “I like painting” (Maria) or “I can be creative” (Kennedy) others enjoyed the break from the monotony of the everyday job, “It’s a fun mental break....it’s a day to get away from the office” (Emily). The change in daily activity was also reiterated by Leah, who explained, “It helps keep you involved in other things besides for just work.” These participants personally enjoyed what the EVP had to offer and the motivation to participate was therefore prompted by their interest in the different types of activities available.

To further entice employee involvement, some firms provide organized transportation to and from designated EVP activities. As discussed in Chapter IV, Abington is one firm that collectively organizes its EVPs for all employees and other participating stakeholders. One of the project leads, Vanessa, enthusiastically talked about the bus that was provided for all participants and how easy it was to go to work, board the bus, and as a group arrive on time at each designated location. In the following excerpt from my field notes, I discuss the interaction I had with Vanessa before the EVP began:

Before everyone arrived, Vanessa provided a rundown of the day's activities. She talked about the truck arriving the day before with supplies. She told me that she wasn't doing much today because she helped set up yesterday and this morning. However, I observed her walking around, checking in with the other volunteers, and ensuring teams had what they needed. She said [the firm] made it easy to participate, she talked about being able to arrive to work with luxury buses waiting to transport teams to each project. There was breakfast, coffee, and snacks set up under a tent in the shade. Two employees in charge of logistics sat under the tents waiting to check everyone in. The buses arrived a couple of minutes early. The volunteers already onsite cheered those who were getting off the bus. Once off the bus, the participants lined up under the tent and the logistics team handed out nametags while others grabbed cups of coffee.

Vanessa discussed how every detail was meticulously planned by the firm, thereby making it easy for employees to simply show-up and participate. Volunteers did not have to worry about transportation to an off-site event, and, in the case of this specific EVP, the nonprofit was about an hour away from the corporate offices. Instead, the firm and a few designated employees arranged everything for the volunteers.

Likewise, participants of other EVP events observed in this dissertation also talked about transportation. For example, a few participants described how they carpooled to the activity. It was through carpooling that some participants, who volunteered in locations away from the office, were able to engage with teams they may not work with on a daily basis. For example, St. Germain associates from two different states and eight different stores carpooled to attend an off-site EVP located in a large city in Southern New England. Thus, organized transportation often helped to make it more convenient for employees to participate in the EVP.

In summary, convenience was voiced as a significant factor in both choice of, and participation in, an EVP activity. Participants revealed that both location and type of activity are important factors when deciding to participate in an EVP activity. As such, throughout the decision-making process, participants weighed the costs and benefits of staying onsite versus time away from the workplace. Finally, for some participants it was the basic need of transportation that aided in the accessibility of the EVP event. Although convenience is defined differently by participants, it is clearly a deciding factor for employee engagement in EVP activities.

### **Personal Satisfaction**

As revealed in Chapter IV, EVPs have the potential to benefit a firm as well as its employees and the nonprofits it works with. Along with convenience of participating in an EVP event, a deciding factor for many participants is the personal satisfaction gained through the engagement with an EVP. Interview data revealed that by doing good for others, participants experience joy, resulting in appreciation of the EVP. That is, when

asked why he/she chose to participate in the EVP event, many participants simply stated that they “enjoy” the activity. Other examples include, “it makes me feel good to do for others” (Sophia), “It's such a good experience to give back” (Beth), and “inspiring” (Makayla). It appears that the various EVPs observed in this dissertation provided participants with a sense of enjoyment through the act of helping others.

For this reason, fun seemed important to participants when discussing what was liked about the EVP. With statements such as, “It’s fun to help out” (Trinity), “It was a fun activity” (Kara), “It's important and fun” (Gillian), and “It's fun and needed” (Madelyn), participants revealed the desire to be a part of something exciting along with the added benefit of helping those in need. Another participant, Patrick, also stated, “It was fun and for a good cause.” Accordingly, it appears that among these participants, having fun is just as important as addressing social issues when volunteering.

It is clear from the data that once the initial decision to participate in an EVP is made, and the participant experiences a sense of fun or pleasure from the activity, it is this sense of gratification that becomes the motivating factor for continued participation in EVPs from year to year. One example of the continued satisfaction achieved through the EVP was voiced by Patrick. He likened volunteering to an addiction, and explained his reasons for continued involvement,

It’s really the feeling of personal satisfaction that comes from helping others when you volunteer. This feeling can be addicting after seeing the joy and happiness it brings those in need. I never knew the feeling myself until actually participating in an event and meeting someone that was directly affected from the service provided. We helped rebuild her grandmother’s roof after the hurricane damage down East. Now I will be sure to sign up for any opportunity to help in the future,



and I feel strongly encouraged to spend more time, not just at work, doing more volunteer work and helping those in need.

As a result of the EVP, Patrick described the joy he felt when helping others. To attain this feeling again, he continues to be involved with the EVP opportunities offered by his employer. Indeed, it was through the initial EVP experience that Patrick learned of the impact volunteering can have not just on others, but on one's self.

Throughout the data collection process, participants cited the experience associated with the EVP, along with the feeling of gratification as key reasons for continual involvement. Like Patrick, Olivia shared the same passion for helping others, "I love to give back to my community... it makes you feel good to do something for someone else... Because it feels good to help others and it resets your own priorities." That is, Olivia reflected upon what she personally gained from the experience. Similarly, Anna stated, "I love to donate time to others. I am passionate about volunteering, it's something I love to do." Overall, participants emphasized the satisfaction that stems from being able to give their time to something that made a difference.

Indeed, the satisfaction of helping those in need emerged as a motivating factor for participation. Likewise, so did appreciation of the nonprofit partners. Participation in repeated events creates deeper awareness among participants of the nonprofits that the firm partners with. For example, Cindy referred to the nonprofit as, "a great organization." This feeling of admiration was also shared by Ellie who stated, "We love working with *Second Chance*" and according to Ava, she participated because "I've done it before and really enjoyed it. I really like what the organization contributes to its

communities.” It seems that an awareness of the nonprofit’s mission develops through the EVP and inspires participants to return to volunteer again to further support the specific organization.

As such, it also appears that participants’ enjoyment in volunteering is in part tied to the mission of the nonprofit and the good it achieves in the community. The four firms in this study support nonprofits seeking to address issues of poverty, social injustice, and youth education. Such foci are important to some participants like Amelia, who chose to volunteer at the *BMSA* camp and believed her efforts were quite important because, as she puts it, “I love the idea of camp and what it means to kids.” When discussing the event, she was passionate about creating a memorable experience for all children. The EVP was tasked with grounds clean-up at the camp and Amelia was very optimistic that their team’s clean-up efforts would have a positive impact on the campers in the future. The participants cleared out weeds and old plants from the garden beds. It was hoped that the children would have the opportunity to replant vegetables in the Spring, and according to Amelia, this particular activity would make it easier for campers to concentrate on the task at hand, saying, “...hopefully the children can focus on planting.” Thus, Amelia gained satisfaction from knowing the children would benefit in the future from the EVP efforts that day.

Like Amelia, Ashley also volunteered with the *BMSA*. However, her activity was on-the-job and onsite with *BMSA Seacoast*, educating teens on the career opportunities in the apparel industry. When reflecting on her experience, Ashley explained her choice to volunteer that day,

I love teaching kids job skills since they don't learn them in school. It feels good to give back to community by teaching them the skills they need to know. Volunteering has always been something I enjoy doing and I had a great experience with this one.

While Ashley states that she personally enjoys volunteering, she also points to filling a need in the community and the gratification she gets from helping others. Many participants shared experiences similar to Amelia and Ashley, in that they gained a greater appreciation for the needs of the local community through the act of volunteering.

Generally, participants felt positive about the experience of participating in an EVP. However, frustration can arise if participants think that more can be accomplished. In the following excerpt from my field notes, Layla expressed frustration about the disconnect between a firm's motivation to engage employees versus solve societal issues. For the EVP activity, Layla replaced stickers on sewer drains (see Figure 47).

This project provided a lot of downtime, allowing the team I observed to get to know each other better. Layla was bubbly and enthusiastic. She spoke much more than Jeanine. Both said they were new to [the firm]. I asked them about the day's activity and both immediately said they thought it would be something different. They expected to be in the water, cleaning a waterway, not updating signs on sewers. Both seemed happy but Layla said it, *'has the ability to go bigger.'* She talked about other firms with a strong sustainability focus. She focused on one particular firm in California that cleans oceans and waterways through the sale of its product and the volunteer efforts of its employees. She then said, *'But I guess volunteering is more for the volunteers. This activity is for us and not the waterways.'* Then both girls talked about being able to get out of the office and be outside.

Interestingly, Layla framed the EVP as something that benefits the employees of the firm, as opposed to those the EVP is aimed to help. While most participants revealed the

enjoyment achieved by helping others throughout this study, Layla is one of the few who pointed to the intrinsic value of an EVP, benefitting the employee versus the larger good of the community. Indeed, based on the observation and interview data from this study, it is often the volunteers who get something from the EVP activity. That is, along with the benefits to other stakeholders, it is the employee who gains an internal sense of satisfaction through engagement with an EVP activity.



*Figure 47. Getting to know each other while replacing “Do Not Dump” Stickers on Sewer Grates. (Photo by author)*

It appears that personal satisfaction manifested in the form of joy and fun from participation in EVP events. As such, participants often exhibited an overwhelming enthusiasm towards volunteering with statements such as, “I don't know how to not volunteer” (Oliver) and “Every time we are offered the opportunity I do it” (Sophia). As a result, the gratification achieved from the EVP became the impetus for further

engagement in future events. Additionally, participants revealed a personal connection to the mission of the nonprofits supported by the EVP. Thus, in this study, much of the decision to partake in an EVP seem to be grounded in personal reward.

### **Connecting with Others**

Although satisfaction from the volunteer activity motivates participation in an EVP, the desire to connect with others further strengthens it. As discussed in the previous section, connections can be established between employees of a firm and community members, especially a nonprofit organization, during an EVP. From the data, it is clear that participants want to interact, be connected, and help others through the various activities associated with EVPs. In turn, many of them seek a personal connection with the causes supported by the nonprofit and/or community group.

The choice to participate in the EVP was often cited by participants as “a very personal decision” (Kara). As discussed in the previous section, some participate in an EVP activity to support the mission of a particular nonprofit. However, other participants reference a personal connection as the reason for participation in the EVP. For example, Sam was quite passionate about the opportunity to positively impact an area of town he is familiar with. He stated, “I grew up on the southeast side of town and was excited about the idea of helping that community.” It is this personal connection to the community that guided his choice in EVP activities.

A desire to connect and care for others on a personal level was further exemplified by Oliver. While discussing the reasons for his participation in the day’s event, he indicated that, “The drug epidemic is a serious issue in [our state] and I have a

friend who lost a son to a drug overdose in 2016.” A personal connection between the mission of the EVP nonprofit and the experiences of the employee can therefore come together within a specific EVP event. Moreover, a personal connection is also reflected in Anna’s statement that, “Cancer has not only touched my family, but numerous friends and their families.” Thus, Anna chose to volunteer for the breast cancer walk that her employer’s EVP supported. The personal experiences of both Anna and Oliver clearly impacted their choice of EVP.

Similarly, Madelyn discussed what the *BMSA Camp* offers community stakeholders, “My daughter attends summer camps there, and it has enthusiastic and great leaders.” Madelyn’s personal connection to the *BMSA* prompted her to choose to support the nonprofit during her firm’s day of service. She added, “The *BMSA* gives back to the community and children.” Madelyn chose to support a nonprofit she is acquainted with, and one with a mission she supports. Thus, a pattern emerged in the data, revealing a desire to engage in EVP activities that are connected to nonprofits with missions that align with the personal experiences of participants.

At times, the connection between the participant and the firm’s nonprofit partner overshadowed an awareness of the firm’s connection to the EVP activity. For example, Jeannine acknowledged her personal connection to the location of the event but confusion over the firm’s choice in activity. She explained, “I chose this activity because I went to [the local university] for my undergrad. I don’t really know why RGM chose this activity. No one in my group knew what we were doing until we got to the campus.” Although she acknowledges choosing the activity based on her familiarity with the location, she

indicates that the firm provided little information beyond the name and place of the event. Clearly, there is an opportunity for the firm to improve its communication with employees regarding its choice of EVPs.

Although inconsistencies surfaced in the implementation of some EVPs, not all firms in this study work in this manner. It appears that some will listen to their employees and select activities based on their areas of interest. For example, Oliver said, “Organizations that we support are sponsored by employees and not Abington, so whatever organizations are important to the employee base are okay with me.” According to Oliver, his employer seeks employee feedback before implementing EVP activities. Thus, some firms represented in this study seek a strategic connection with select nonprofits, aligning firm values with employee interest, and in turn, fulfilling the desires of multiple stakeholders to address the current needs of the community.

### **Paying it Forward by Giving Back: Addressing Community Needs**

The decision to support a cause and participate in an EVP is often left to the employee. Although the firm organizes the EVP, participants in this study indicate that the decision to participate in an EVP activity is driven by more than personal gain and thinking beyond one’s self to consider the needs of others. As discussed in Chapter II, stakeholders believe that apparel firms have an obligation to give back to society, and, through the means of corporate philanthropy, employees of a firm are provided the opportunity to help their employer “give back.” In turn, local communities are supported through various EVP events. Two themes emerged from the data to highlight how

community needs are connected to employee motivations to participate in an EVP: (1) *Doing Good*, and (2) *Helping Others*.

### **Doing Good**

Interpretation of the data indicates that the philanthropic efforts targeting the needs of the community are important to many participants. That is, among the firms included in this study, the opportunity for doing good through participation in various EVP activities provides value to both types of stakeholders in this study, not just the employee. Specifically, many participants seemed to understand that a single action, such as volunteering, can have a significant impact on improving the local community. Participants, such as James, voiced that EVPs are an "...opportunity to give back to the community, do a good deed, and promote teamwork with colleagues outside of the office." That is, participants seem to understand how EVPs not only benefit them and their employers, but also the broader community.

To better understand the participant perspective on the EVP, all were asked why they chose to volunteer. Most responded positively, and fairly similarly across the whole. Responses ranged from an individual account, "It is important to me to help our community" (Gillian), to a group perspective, "We meet the needs of the community" (Chris), or simply "We're just here to help" (Crystal). Others discussed external goals, "To get out and engage" (Erin), or to "Make someone happy" (Rachel). Some participants provided more detail as to why they volunteer. For example, Sam added a personal account as to why he believes it is important to participate in the day's activities, "I grew up a couple of blocks down the street and was excited about the idea of helping



that community. It's important to return to where you're from and I return as often as I can." According to Sam, it is necessary to support the community that supported him in the past. In the same vein, James offered a pay-it-forward perspective on volunteering:

The world continues to shrink, what we do as individuals and as an organization can and will have a huge impact whether we desire it to or not. We can ruin the future or make it better, status quo is not an option. I choose to try and make it better.

Both James and Sam are clear in why they think doing good will help local communities, both now and in the future.

Likewise, participants discussed how the actions of a firm can support and sustain communities. According to Ashley, it is the responsibility of firms to do good in the community, thereby acting as good corporate citizens:

It shows that the company does care about the people. It's not just about making money, it's also impacting others' lives by teaching them a skill...or just as simple as helping a nonprofit run something where they might not have enough volunteers to participate. It feels good personally to give back to the community, so when your company supports you in doing so, it makes it feel even better.

It should be noted that participants recognize the fact that not all firms have the means to help. However, if a firm has the resources, then participants expressed the belief that it is important to utilize those resources for good. Overall, most participants interviewed in this study expressed a belief in the obligation of the firm, and that of its employees, to do good for others. According to Sandy,

It is a great thing. If a corporation has the means to help, then it should help. Especially when the community is the reason for their success. Giving back is always the right thing to do for our community. It makes me feel like I can make a difference.

For participants like Sandy, firms should recognize the needs of the communities they do business in, and if available, should use their resources in ways that can address these needs. Therefore, through philanthropic efforts, firms can help communities and their stakeholders to flourish.

### **Helping Others**

Volunteerism, as a resource of the firm, can be used as a tool to help the broader community in which the firm operates. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter II, firms are expected to foster efforts to provide support for local communities and not just in faraway places (Maignan & Ralston, 2002). As illustrated by this dissertation, an EVP is one way firms can have a positive impact at home.

According to participants, the impact of an EVP activity on the community can be achieved through tasks specifically designed to help others. Indeed, helping others was something that surfaced frequently as a means for enticing participants to become involved in the EVP. Although most EVPs observed in this study consisted of large groups, impact may also be achieved on a smaller scale. As stated by Elizabeth, the EVP does not need to be an elaborate event. Something small and strategic can be just as effective, “I liked that we were helping those less fortunate. Sometimes the smallest gesture can mean a great deal to someone.” Elizabeth helped construct bags to be filled with toiletries for a local women’s homeless shelter. She viewed the creation of the bags

and donation of toiletries as a simple act of kindness. Similarly, Carla discussed the various initiatives, both large- and small-scale, that her firm offers,

The local service projects that we do annually help improve the community...help groups and individuals. We have frequent food drives and even have animal shelter drives. We participate in 'a simple gesture,' a means of supplying local food banks and pantries. The food bank gives bags to fill and we take them when we can and drop them back off at the office. We also participate in and raise monies for many organizations such as MS, Cancer, ALS, Leukemia & Lymphoma, and more. We recycle and compost. I try to always join in on what we do to help make our community better.

According to Elizabeth and Carla, helping others does not need to be the result of a large, highly orchestrated event, but can also come from a small act of support for a cause.

Additionally, Carla talked about moving beyond volunteering to philanthropic giving in the form of food and monetary donations. Thus, corporate philanthropy occurs as both large- and small-scale efforts and in various ways. As such, both types of initiatives were observed across the four firms studied in this dissertation.

Large or small, all of the firms in this study seemed connected to helping communities through partnerships with local nonprofits. Improving the lives of stakeholders who live in local communities seems to be important to participants. Likewise, by supporting a nonprofit they indirectly support the local community. According to Anna, this is why she participates, "If it can help nonprofit organizations thrive, I am all for it!" Her point was further reiterated by Madelyn's statement on why volunteering is important, "It is needed...the *BMSA* offers children a place to grow, and has a leadership program they can also attend." In an excerpt from my field notes,

Madelyn discussed the importance of leadership training for youth sponsored by the *BMSA*:

Madelyn was very interested in supporting the *BMSA* and spoke from experience because her daughter attends camp there. She discussed the importance of returning to nature and disconnecting from electronics. She also emphasized the importance of connecting with others on a personal level. Stating, '*As a female, it's important to develop leadership skills in girls*'. As a result, she saw a new confidence in her daughter when she would return home from the camp. She also explained that tuition was based on what you could afford and the *Community Chest* covered the cost for parents who could not afford it.

Madelyn recognizes the good that the *BMSA* offers her own daughter. She, in turn, volunteers to provide the same opportunity to other girls in the community. She also recognizes the cost associated with attending camp. She described how community partners are working together to positively benefit local youth, providing opportunities that may not have been obtainable. According to Madelyn, the camp run by the *BMSA* empowers future leaders, and in return, builds a stronger and more sustainable community.

In a similar vein, Ashley discussed her personal desire to help others and how the EVP meets her needs along with those of the community:

I think it's a great combination of employee engagement and a benefit of working for the company. I personally enjoy giving back to the community and am often not presented with much time in my personal life to do so since I am a working mom of a toddler. So...being able to volunteer my time and help a community program instead of working in my store is a nice break and feels really good to be able to give back and have my company support that.

Participants such as Ashley appreciate the opportunity provided by her firm to make a difference in the community. She spoke of the lack of time in her personal life and she values the time during her workday to engage in the EVP. Thus, the EVP clearly provides a benefit to not only the community but the employees who participate in the activities.

Interestingly, supporting a cause, such as social injustice, was often mentioned by participants in conjunction with the motivation to help others. That is, some participants tied their motivation for EVP participation to the particular disparities evident in the local community. As Oliver pointed out, “[It is] a city in need and a city with a large drug problem” and Emily also identified this need as the reason for her participation, “...to help those in recovery.” The needs of cities and towns were further discussed by participants. Layla mentioned RGM working with the local city to meet the needs of its population and Sam stated that the EVP had a positive “impact on the minority community in [the city].” Likewise, other participants focused on the younger residents of communities, addressing the needs of children. For example, when asked why she chose the food bank as her volunteer activity, Leah said, “I wanted to know that I was helping make a difference in children's lives. I don’t like the idea of knowing that there are kids going hungry.” In a similar vein, Vanessa discussed her experience with a nonprofit seeking to empower girls. When asked why she chose the particular EVP activity, she replied, “Because I have a daughter who has plenty of love and resources...it was nice to be able to help an organization who supports and keeps at-risk girls safe while teaching them self-care, self-confidence and self-worth.” Generally, most

participants talked about participating in the EVP to support a local cause designed to help people in the community.

For some participants, being cognizant of their own good fortune seemed to prompt feelings of obligation to help others. For example, Ava explained why volunteering is important to her and why she participates in employer-led activities, "...for me volunteering is being able to give back to those less fortunate. There is always someone worse off than you." That is, volunteering enhances the community by assisting those in need, with the hope of improving the lives of others. Like Ava, Carla views the opportunity to impact the community as one of the reasons she participates in EVP events, "I like to volunteer if I can to help in the community."

EVPs target the needs of the local community with the hope of providing social change for good. According to participants, the actions of the firm can make a difference. Participants appear to be motivated to engage in the EVP as a means to "do good" in the local community and help those less fortunate. As such, firms "pay-it-forward" by utilizing firm resources to positively impact the broader community. The next section examines the influence of peers in the workplace when deciding to participate in the EVP.

### **The Group Effect: Bonding Opportunity or Peer Pressure?**

As discussed in Chapter II, an EVP is an organized and planned activity wherein employees of a firm collectively serve the needs of the local community. An EVP is inherently a group activity, as it is through assembling a number of employees together that a firm can best impact others through its philanthropic efforts. Indeed, according to

participants, the outcomes achieved through the group activity is often a reason for engagement. That is, participants spoke of the “team building,” “bonding,” “networking,” and “encouragement” that is achieved through the EVP. The chance to be part of something bigger also frequently serves to motivate participants, including the potential reward of building a larger social network.

To better understand the culture of the four firms regarding volunteerism in the workplace, participants were asked about peer perceptions of the EVP and involvement in planned activities. For example, when Beth was asked about her boss’s views on volunteering during scheduled work hours, she responded, “... it’s an excellent way to give back. [My boss] is very enthusiastic about volunteer opportunities.” Similarly, Alice discussed learning of her employer’s volunteer opportunities from her supervisors, stating, “My manager absolutely loves that we volunteer. They [the management] are always posting volunteering opportunities. We all do what we can to help.” Further elaborating on the team effort to pitch in and help, Vanessa discussed her office group, “Everyone is always on board with volunteer efforts.” It appears that other firm stakeholders actively encourage these participants to become involved in EVP activities.

The literature suggests that the motivation to participate in an EVP includes the ability to spend more time with friends and the chance to meet new people (Peloza et al., 2009). Based on the data collected for this dissertation, participants recognize the benefits of the EVP, including using volunteering as a way to foster relationships with co-workers. Clearly, this suggests that firms have the ability to capitalize on the teambuilding benefits achieved from EVPs.

Despite the fact that the decision to volunteer is an individual one, among participants, the team camaraderie that occurs is often a driving factor for involvement in workplace events, such as volunteering. One example was voiced by Leslie, who not once, but twice stated that volunteering was “Good team building.” As a result, many participants indicated that their team or group collectively chose an activity to do together. Sophia explained, “I asked our team to sign up together.” Alice shared a similar perspective, stating, “[Volunteering] is a bonding experience for us co-workers and it's giving back to the society.” Some cited the “camaraderie and team building” (Emily) that resulted from an EVP as a reason for volunteering. It appears that emphasizing the teambuilding efforts may help firms increase EVP engagement among employees.

Although some participants discussed intentionally volunteering year after year with the same individuals, other participants, like Jeanine, used the activity to engage with individuals she did not already know. As she explained, “It was a way for me to meet new people and help the community,” revealing that her motivation to engage in an EVP is in part to make new acquaintances. Other participants, such as Ashley, also discussed the new relationships formed through the EVP. She said, “I also think it's a great feeling for myself by doing what's right for the people in my community. It also gives me a great chance to meet some new people and learn.” It appears that EVP events can forge new relationships by bringing people together.

Ashley, a retail store manager, discussed how her team benefitted from new formed friendships (see Figure 48) which emerged during an EVP.



I also think it's great for employee engagement because your team gets together on a more personal level and has fun while doing so. For example, my women's lead she was so incredibly shy. We went to the children's and friends event in Providence and she really opened up. She face painted and had so much fun with the kids and talked to the other brand associates she had never met before.

Ashley was able to provide specific examples, not only from the current volunteer event, but also from previous activities that her store team participated in. She talked about a specific employee that seemed to open up from the experience of the EVP, as well as the new friendships formed with her workplace peers. Thus, participation in the EVP can also benefit multiple stakeholders by strengthening relationships between co-workers.



*Figure 48. Bonds Strengthened from Time Shared at the EVP. (Photo by author)*

Like Ashley, Madelyn also cited the new bonds formed through the EVP, especially among employees that have not met each other yet, “It helps to build relationships among employees who normally do not interact on a day-to-day basis” and

as Trinity mentioned, “It’s bonding between the associates.” As a whole, forming new relationships through volunteerism seems to be an important benefit to those participants who saw the EVP as a positive experience.

Ashley provided additional insight into how workplace relationships may be strengthened through the EVP. She discussed what can be achieved through volunteering.

It’s not only great engagement from a store level but at a district level too. You get to meet so many people from different stores and bond with them. Also, with our district manager attending, it was great for us to be able to build our relationship with her. She really enjoys it and usually participates because she knows how important it is.

In this excerpt, Ashley explains that engagement occurs at various levels in the retail organization, from part-time associate to district-level manager, when participating in the EVP. She also mentions networking with employees from other locations. It appears that both the employee and the firm can benefit from EVP participation due to the potential for enhanced workplace success through the networking opportunities it affords.

Interestingly, many participants cited their supervisors when discussing the reasons for volunteering. That is, management can lead by example, encouraging a response from others in the firm. For example, Alice said, “[My boss] absolutely loves it. They are always posting volunteering opportunities.” Both Oliver and Patrick said their supervisors are supportive, often saying, “Go for it!” when they ask to volunteer on company time. Moreover, many participants discussed how their managers volunteered alongside them, acting as positive role models (Figure 49). It is important to note that this may, however, be a function of the particular sample represented in this dissertation.



*Figure 49. Managers, Associates, and other Community Members Volunteering Together. (Photo by participant)*

On that note, as represented by three of the four firms in this study, not all employees choose to participate in EVP events. A few participants provided insight into why this may occur. For instance, when asked about his coworkers' participation in an EVP event, Sam stated, "Some like it and some feel it prevents them from working." Likewise, when Elizabeth was asked about volunteering, "It isn't something you can make people do. They either have it in their hearts to help or they don't." Additionally, participants were asked if an increase in salary or a promotion is correlated with EVP participation. Interestingly, almost all participants strongly disagreed with this statement. Yet, not all employees feel supported by their supervisors to volunteer and others do not see the value in the experience.

In an effort to understand the motivation to participate in EVPs further, Ashley was asked if anyone ever felt forced to volunteer. She described how volunteering is talked about at her store and her perspective on quality versus quantity.

It's never a '*You must do something*' it's a '*Hey let's give back to the community and have fun with each other while doing so*' kind of thing. Granted everyone doesn't volunteer, but I would much rather have two super passionate volunteers than 50 people who aren't passionate about giving back.

Ashley's excerpt reveals that not every employee chooses to volunteer, which was evident during the EVP event at her store, where only a small portion of the staff participated. However, according to Ashley, it is important for employees to want to be involved. Ashley and other participants believe that the firm should not force the EVP on those who do not wish to participate. For example, Zoe stated, "You should never push something on someone." In the same vein, Teresa said, "I don't think [volunteering] should be required because if you aren't passionate about it, the community event won't be exciting." She thinks that the impact of the event will be lessened if participation is mandatory.

Importantly, participants talked about authenticity as being critical to EVP participation. That is, the motivation must come from the individual, not the group. In an interview with Ava, she mentioned having a large staff, but only a few associates participated in the day's events. When asked about motivating her team to volunteer, she echoed Ashley's opinion, responding,

I don't believe in forcing people to volunteer, it doesn't happen like that in most stores. I like to be able to ask my entire team to join. It doesn't always work out that way, but it helps others and brings us all together.

Ava thinks it is important not to force participation in the EVP, but at the same time, emphasizes teambuilding as a beneficial outcome.

In general, a common motivational method among participants that surfaced is encouragement. That is, support for participation was commonly voiced by participants and shared amongst various management levels in the firm. For example, when talking about her co-workers, Anna said she “Encourages them [to volunteer], but they love to do it as well.” On the other hand, Karen thinks it is important for others to experience the gratification she gets from volunteering. She explained why she encourages her coworkers to join her when volunteering “...so they can experience the same satisfaction that I get when I serve.” As illustrated in Figure 50, Karen and another participant Stacy, appear to be happy while packing macaroni and cheese at the food bank. Overall, it seems that engagement in EVP events improves over time, as employees share their positive experiences with their co-workers.



*Figure 50. Volunteering with Co-workers. (Photo by author)*

Some participants acknowledge the need to use peer pressure to encourage involvement in EVP events. However, it appears that participants seek to do so in a positive versus punitive way. For example, the EVP was Alice's first time volunteering with St. Germain. She stated she would volunteer again and encourage her peers to do the same. She said, "It's a bonding experience for us coworkers and it's giving back to society." She feels that it is important to share the positive experience from the event, however, "I would rather be with a group of volunteers who genuinely wanted to be there." In the same vein, motivation through encouragement is also used by Sophia, who said, "You can't make someone [volunteer], but [my company] and co-workers are good at encouraging it." As such, according to Sam, choosing to participate in EVP events, "...sets the tone for your responsibility within your community."

For some, team bonding evolved from a colleague-based working relationship to a family-like atmosphere, further strengthening bonds between co-workers. For example, when observing Ava and her team at the EVP, it resembled the feelings associated with a family reunion. The following excerpt from my field notes reveals the bonding that occurred among participants.

It was the end of the shift, the mood was light and jovial. The team from Wanderlust worked much faster than the other volunteers. This allowed them time to talk about a range of topics when hanging and sizing the clothing. I observed the team smiling, laughing, and enjoying each other's company. John talked about the time he lived on Cindy's couch. They all discussed Ava's backyard wedding. They harassed Ava for her 70 mile commute to work. One participant called her, 'crazy.' The group spent some time talking about former associates they worked with and where they are now. During this time, I asked the participants how long they all worked for the company and most said over 5 years. They also talked about all of the different locations they worked at in New England and the Mid-Atlantic region. John and I also talked about the managers in Virginia we both knew. I found out he worked at a store I helped open over 15 years ago. Small world, everyone had a connection to someone else there.

This excerpt highlights the relationships between participants that were further developed during the EVP. Each individual asked personal questions and used the EVP as a chance to catch up on each other's personal lives. It was also an opportunity to reminisce, as both workplace and personal stories were shared. Participants discussed past experiences and enjoyed laughing and having an overall positive experience. In sum, many participants seem to gain a sense of solidarity from the EVP, to the extent that bonds were formed and relationships between co-workers were strengthened as a result of EVP participation, although not all participants shared the same value from the EVP, and some chose to join

activities based on peer or supervisor encouragement. The next section further examines the role of the firm in motivating employee participation in an EVP event.

### **The Firm and I: Corporate Culture and EVP Expectations**

Corporate philanthropy is designed to address the needs of others beyond the firm. An increasing number of firms are developing EVPs to coordinate employee efforts in support of local causes and to serve community stakeholders (Peloza et al., 2009). Thus, the motivation to participate in the EVP may be driven by the firm itself and not the individual. That is, in some cases, the firms explored in this study appear to use the EVP as a conduit of company culture in order to increase brand awareness while also serving the broader community.

Observational and interview data revealed that many participants compared their current firm's efforts with other firms they have worked for. In most cases, participants' past employers did not perform as well relative to the current firm's CSR and corporate philanthropy efforts. For example, Leah talked about what may be individually gained from an employer-led philanthropic activity. She stated, "Giving back is rewarding and some companies don't give the opportunity to their employees." When comparing her current employer to others, Leah believes it is important to offer the chance to do more. Similarly, Sophia said, "This is the best company to work for...we are always doing something to help the community." Clearly, according to these participants, philanthropic efforts add value to the firm.

Interestingly, among the participants in this study and across the four firms, EVPs were often referred to as a workplace benefit. According to Evelyn, volunteer time is a



benefit provided by her company, in that, “Abington gives us community service days to participate in this cause. I think this is a great benefit, it is a good feeling helping others in need.” That is, the time off given by a firm to its employees to volunteer is regarded as a reward. Similarly, Patrick discussed the philanthropic initiatives of his firm and the benefits provided to employees in more detail. He explained,

Many times throughout the year the company as a whole puts days aside for the employees to do benefit projects to help the community. For me, in the past two years, I have been able to help clean an exhibit at the natural science center, help rebuild a roof for victims of Hurricane Matthew..., and create bags for the needy. This is on top of the very...many opportunities that arise to donate to both local and national aid groups, such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, local food pantries....and a number of other local charities that are not coming to mind off hand...but there are a lot of company supported opportunities to give back to the community. Most of the time the company also offers matching incentives, usually at 100% up to a certain amount.

According to Patrick, the firm supports the local community through philanthropy and dedicates time throughout the year to sustain such efforts. He described helping multiple causes in the community, ranging from disaster relief to aiding the homeless, and talked about the firm offering time off from work and the matching of monetary donations to employees. It appears that the philanthropic options the firm provides to employees are plentiful, suggesting that the firm values the impact its employees can have. In turn, through EVP participation, employees support the values of the firm.

Many participants also talked about a “culture of giving,” and that service through the EVP is in the firm’s “DNA.” That is, the firm’s values are represented in its philanthropic efforts. James framed the EVP as “company culture.” He explained,

Yes, we already do a lot, but are not resting on it. We continue to evolve and do more, it is becoming part of our DNA, if it is not already. Additionally, it is just good business, consumers expect it of brands or companies that they purchase from.

Clearly, firm culture can act as a catalyst for participation in EVPs, as James pointed to the ways his firm uses philanthropy to position the brand. While he discusses some of the firm's current actions, he thinks more can be done. Interestingly, James cites an additional stakeholder group, in the form of consumers, as a driving force for EVP initiatives. Thus, a firm's culture of philanthropy and interest in improving the community can result in a positive representation of the firm to its stakeholders.

On the flip side, the power of the firm to encourage individuals to participate in the EVP is not always positive. Whereas some participants consider participation in the EVP as an added benefit of the firm, others view it as an expectation. For example Wendy said, "It is part of the culture...it's what you do." That is, Wendy does not feel she has a choice in participation. Conversely, Layla, described how her participation is actually tied to her job description, "Working in sustainability, it is necessary to be a part of volunteering events." Some participants revealed coercion to participate. For example, when asked, *Why are you volunteering today?* Zion simply stated, "My team was going." In an excerpt from my field notes I describe my observations of Zion and one other participant at the *BMSA Camp*.

There was a cabin with a wooden porch next to the gardens. Sitting on the porch, in the shade, were two participants. They were drinking water. I attempted to approach them and have a conversation but they did not say much and were hesitant to engage. They did not appear to be happy. They did not seem to

understand the purpose of the day's activities or why they had to be there. These two individuals did not participate and when asked why they chose this particular EVP event one participant stated, '*I had to be here.*'

Obviously, when the firm expects employees to participate in the EVP, not all employees may actively or willingly engage. Another participant, Emily, also discussed the pressure to conform to what others are doing on the job, stating, "It's called volunteering. If people don't want to participate they shouldn't have to...but there is a pressure at my company to volunteer. It's called *voluntoldism*." Emily used the term 'voluntoldism' to describe the forced nature of EVPs and employee participation that is part of the culture where she works. That is, while the firm offers a choice in activity, employees are expected to choose one from the list provided. Thus, some form of EVP participation expected.

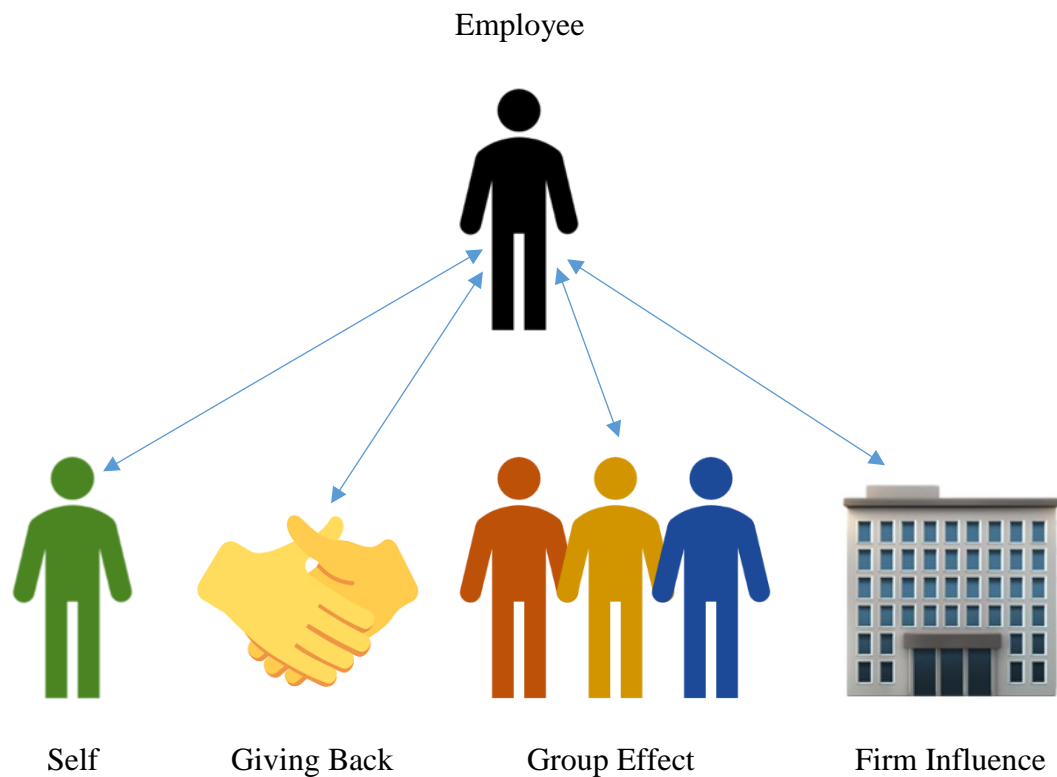
For some, brand image is linked to a firm's engagement in EVPs. For example, when asked why she chose to participate in the *Girl Power* activity, Vanessa related the opportunity to promoting the Abington brand, "...as we're relaunching our women's footwear line, this organization got on my radar since it ties back into helping girls and women get introduced to the trades." Beth offered a similar response when asked the same question. She emphasized the opportunity to show others about her job through volunteering,

I wanted to show the people about what I do behind the scenes at St. Germain...to help them better understand the hard work that goes into every day. I did this to get [youth] interested in applying for a job at St. Germain.

That is, these participants view the EVP as an opportunity to promote the image of the firm, or its specific brands, and the firm's potential job opportunities available to youth. Ashley added, "I think it not only benefits the brand I love to work for, not just in a PR way, but build some great relationships and potential business sort of way." Although the EVP is established to benefit the community and those in need, participants clearly revealed the ways that it also benefits the firm.

As described in this chapter, a firm's CSR initiatives are typically implemented by employees as stakeholders. Based on the data, through the EVP acts as a conduit of good for the communities that firms do business in, there are a multitude of influences on the employee decision-making process for participation in the EVP. As represented in Figure 51 (below), the motivation to participate in an EVP is directly linked to several factors, including individual reward, community benefit, team affiliation, and the pressure by the firm. As represented in the figure, the employee, in this case the study's participants, take the costs versus benefits of participation into account, asking *What's in it for me?* For some, the primary benefit is giving back to the community. Employees have the opportunity to address community needs by paying it forward by giving back and doing so on company time. The desire to participate in an EVP goes beyond personal gain, to address the needs of the local community by doing good and helping others. It was revealed, however, that there is more to the decision than individual motivation. There is a group effect, which for some means the chance to be part of something bigger and for others means being encouraged to volunteer by supervisors and coworkers. Last, the participants' decision to volunteer is also influenced by their supervisor and firm

expectations, as well as the culture around philanthropy. That is, the individual motivation to participate in the EVP can be driven by the firm itself, whether it is simply company culture or awareness of EVP participation as a tool to enhance brand image. In conclusion, the motivation to participate in an EVP activity often consists of various layers, with the individual employee being influenced by multiple factors, including one's self, one's co-workers, the community, and the firm.



*Figure 51. The Various Influences Motivating Employee Participation in EVPs*

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the employee perspective relative to the EVP as a form of CSR. The primary motivations that emerged from the data include individual and

group factors as well as community needs and company expectations. In the next chapter, I discuss the perceptions of EVPs among community stakeholders.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **THEMATIC INTERPRETATION PART III, THE EVP AS CSR: THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT**

As discussed in Chapter II, volunteering is a planned activity, involving a commitment of both time and energy, with the end result benefiting the public good (Penner, 2002; Wilson, 2000). Viewed as a type of corporate philanthropy, firms implement EVPs as part of their overall CSR strategy to motivate and enable their employees to serve community needs. In this chapter, the data are interpreted from the perspective of the stakeholders who benefit from a firm's EVP-related activities, offering insight into the community context.

Although specific nonprofits benefit from corporate philanthropy, the data reveal that EVPs can positively impact local communities as well. EVPs help to establish a reciprocal relationship between the nonprofit and firm, however, to better understand the impact EVPs have on the community at large, four subthemes are explored in this chapter: (1) *Connecting Stakeholders*, (2) *A Call to Action*, (3) *A Network of Support*, and (4) *Added Value*.

#### **Connecting Stakeholders**

EVPs essentially serve the needs of society, as firms seek to build engagement with local communities as part of their overall approach to CSR (Kim et al., 2014; Pelozo et al., 2009). At the start, a firm seeks out a nonprofit aimed at addressing a social or

environmental need in order to plan an EVP event linked to the firm's mission. Through the implementation of an EVP, various stakeholders are brought together to share and exchange information, ideas, and achieve goals set forth by both the firm and nonprofit. As a result, the gap between firm resources and community need is bridged.

Interpretation of the data revealed the steps necessary to bring stakeholders together. According to the participants in this study, the first step in this process is that of building a relationship between the firm and a nonprofit. As a result, a connection is formed between multiple stakeholders, including employees of the firm and members of the community it serves. Ultimately, a partnership develops, and the EVP has the potential to offer a return on investment to not only the firm and its employees, but to the community at large. In the following sections, the way that EVPs build relationships and form partnerships between stakeholders is discussed.

### **Building Relationships**

One way a firm bridges the gaps between itself and the local community is by cultivating relationships with nonprofits aimed at addressing the needs of the broader community. However, based on the data, establishing a relationship between a firm and a nonprofit is not instantaneous. Instead, this relationship is honed over time, gradually building the connection between stakeholders. Often, the relationship between a firm and a particular nonprofit starts small to determine if the pair are a good match. According to Jasmine, a volunteer coordinator for the *State Food Bank*, "It's important to build a long-term relationship with small groups first." Thus, when a firm seeks to foster a relationship with a nonprofit, it is necessary to start small. In an excerpt from my field notes, Jasmine



revealed how the relationship between Abington and the *State Food Bank* developed.

During the EVP event, she provided all volunteers a tour of the facility and discussed the daily operations of the food bank.

At the end of the tour and in the last room we viewed, there was a system of conveyer belts. Jasmine talked about how this room was where most of the smaller groups met to volunteer. She said, volunteers meet on a bi-weekly basis in this room to sort and/or pack donated food items. When asked who volunteers regularly she explained that many local groups and agencies volunteer. She then added, [employees of] Abington's local store volunteer here regularly.

In the case of Abington and the *State Food Bank*, it was the local retail stores that initiated contact, consistently bringing in small groups of employee volunteers, and this prompted the start of the relationship.

Interpretation of the data also revealed that in order to build a mutually beneficial relationship, it is necessary for both parties to set goals and establish guidelines before the EVP event occurs. When discussing the relationship between the *State Food Bank* and Abington, Jasmine specifically mentioned working together to meet the needs of both parties. She emphasized the need for a proper-sized group to accomplish the tasks at hand.

It's great [to have volunteers]. Sometimes there are too many volunteers, it's important that needs be met by both...communication and the relationship need to be strong. Sometimes, there are not enough projects and the nonprofit can be overwhelmed, the numbers need to be right....The project must match the outcome.

That is, according to Jasmine, who serves as the food bank's volunteer coordinator, some firms are over-excited to help and think "the more the merrier." She points out that this

can be frustrating for both parties, as the increased volunteer presence may place additional pressure on the nonprofit. Indeed, both parties must listen to each other to be able to meet the demands of the planned EVP event in a reasonable way.

Tammy, who is the volunteer manager for *Second Chance*, voiced a related concern. She explained, “We often have groups wanting to volunteer but we are in a small space and can’t meet everyone’s needs.” Similar to the statements made by Jasmine, Tammy talked about ensuring that the number of volunteers aligns with the needs of the nonprofit. Moreover, to align the mission of the nonprofit with the expectations of volunteers, Tammy discussed some of the guidelines put in place by *Second Chance*. She stated, “We are selective with who we take and require everyone to go through volunteer training to learn about *Second Chance* and our client’s needs.” According to Tammy, a volunteer training program has been established to ensure potential volunteers understand the expectations of the nonprofit and the needs of its clients. Thus, in order to cultivate the relationship between the nonprofit and the firm, clear goals and expectations that meet the needs of all stakeholders involved with the EVP must be set.

Once the expectations of the EVP event are established, the firm and nonprofit must work together to plan the event. Accordingly, the planning phase of the EVP event is another opportunity for the firm and nonprofit to build its relationship. Mary, the founder and program director of *Girl Power*, explained how the nonprofit connected with the firm to plan the event. She stated, “We had meetings with Abington's team leaders to discuss our needs and how best to execute them on this day.” Similarly, Lori, the

marketing manager for the aforementioned nonprofit, discussed in detail the necessary steps involved in the development of the EVP event. She stated, “The volunteers came in with energy and vigor. Abington makes this day important to their employees and it shows. Their organizational skills, planning, and executing shows how their people work on strong teams.” According to Lori, deliberate logistical planning before the EVP event reinforces the relationship as it develops between the nonprofit and firm. Lori further explained, “They were very thorough in checking with us and planning what was needed...making everything happen smoothly.” In this case, during the planning phase it was necessary to have a constant back-and-forth conversation to ensure both groups were in alignment. It is clear that throughout the planning of this particular EVP event, a connection developed between the firm and the nonprofit, and ultimately the EVP served to further strengthen the bond.

Although a solid plan is the first step in a successful EVP event, flexibility is also necessary when changes must occur. In the case of Abington and *Girl Power*, both the nonprofit and firm decided to eliminate a specific project from the day’s planned activities. Lori stated, “There were last minute changes to the plan due to us not being able to build an awning at the food shelter behind [our building]. This was a bigger issue that we all decided was best to drop.” Lori discussed how it was necessary to adjust the organized activities in order to effectively serve the needs of the nonprofit and capabilities of the employee volunteers. She further described the responsiveness and ability of the firm to adapt to such changes, “Abington was very thoughtful and flexible in those situations. It is great having a company who understands those fine details and

can work as a team to see the larger picture and make things happen.” Through organization, constant communication, and flexibility in planning, both groups were able to effectively coordinate the activities associated with the EVP event. As such, due to the connection established between the two groups, a relationship was ultimately formed. Both the firm and nonprofit mutually agreed upon the goals of the event and established guidelines to achieve the desired results. Additionally, flexibility among all parties was integral to the ultimate success of the EVP event. Indeed, mutual interests between the firm and the nonprofit were evident, resulting in the relationship between the two groups that then progressed into a partnership.

### **From Relationship to Partnership**

Interpretation of the data revealed that firms and nonprofits ultimately move beyond a relationship to a partnership, essentially bringing community stakeholders together as firms seek to utilize resources to benefit the local community. In a partnership, a long-term commitment is formed, and based on shared interests, the firm and nonprofit work together over time. For example, in the case of Abington and the *State Food Bank*, the initial relationship was a ‘small start’ that led to broader involvement by the firm. Participants revealed a partnership that grew from a few local retail store volunteers to a large-scale event, bringing in 45 volunteers for one day of service and furthering the impact on the community. The EVP functioned as the culmination of the partnership, bridging the resources of the firm with the needs of the nonprofit.

It also appears that the partnership between the nonprofit and firm flourished through the consistent and dependable help offered by the firm and its employees. Destiny, who is the boutique coordinator for the nonprofit *Second Chance*, discussed Wanderlust and the assistance the firm's employees offer when setting up for the nonprofit's bi-annual sales event. She stated, "I loved everyone's positive attitude and willingness to work....Great staff! ... I would say they responsibly show up twice a year to help with this event, for about five years now." Destiny stressed "responsibly" when discussing Wanderlust, particularly because the firm has been a reliable and consistent source of help whenever the nonprofit is looking for additional volunteers to set up a store for its bi-annual sell-off of excess inventory. In a similar vein, Summer, who is responsible for volunteer engagement at the *State Food Bank*, talked about the nonprofit's partnership with Abington, along with the firm's commitment to service. She stated, "Abington is constantly volunteering and asks that all of their employees do regular volunteering." She also shared her thoughts on the firm employees who volunteer, "They [the employees] are hard-working volunteers who genuinely like to give back to the community." Clearly, according to participants, the assistance offered by both firms and their employees through EVPs is highly regarded by these two nonprofits. Thus, the partnership formed between the two parties means that the nonprofit can rely on regular additional volunteer support from the firm and its employees.

The ability of a nonprofit to rely on the dependability of a firm's employees contributes to a favorable reputation of the firm, which further strengthens the connection between stakeholders. Several participants spoke positively of the various firms

associated with the EVPs observed in this study. For example, when Mary, who is the founder and program director of the nonprofit *Girl Power* was asked about her impression of the firm, she excitedly said, “We love Abington, we have been working together for many years!” Her response highlights how a positive impression of the firm is tied to the longevity of their relationship. In a similar vein, Nicole, who represents *BMSA Seacoast*, revealed her impressions of the firm and its employees saying, “The St. Germain team was helpful, down to earth, and sincere.” In this particular EVP, St. Germain offered leadership training for the youth associated with the BMSA’s counselor-in-training program. When asked about the benefit of the partnership between the firm and the nonprofit, Nicole replied, “They [the employees] were so willing to help and work with our kids, very enthusiastic and flexible.... This process has made me want to shop there more often.” Thus, the nonprofit is willing to engage in future activities with the firm based on the generosity and guidance offered by the firm’s employees. As a result, the partnership a nonprofit enters into with a local firm can translate into positive public relations for multiple stakeholders, thereby benefitting the firm.

Although most employees of the four firms observed in this study acknowledge that the EVP is aimed at helping nonprofit organizations address specific community needs, participants who represent nonprofits also recognize the benefits that volunteering provides to the employees of the firm. For instance, Mary, the program director for *Girl Power*, elaborated on the benefits that employees receive from volunteering,

Abington is always so happy and proud to work with us. They have the opportunity to bond as employees, while dedicating a full day to us which is a

huge game changer. They leave feeling very empowered that they had a huge impact.

According to Mary, Abington continues to partner with the nonprofit due to the positive effects the EVP has on its employees. When asked further about the connection between the firm and the nonprofit, Mary replied, “It is always wonderful for communities to see partnerships in action...helping organizations dedicated to helping those in need.”

Indeed, typically the primary goal of the EVP is to benefit the local community through a nonprofit. Yet, the firm and its employees also benefit from the positive interactions associated with the event.

Overall, it appears that the partnership between the firm and nonprofit established by the EVP is ultimately a valuable resource for the community. Lori, who is the marketing manager for the nonprofit *Girl Power* reflected on the day’s activities and the accomplishments of the volunteers,

It was a wonderful collaboration and organized event.... [The firm] has amazing workers who are dedicated...and appreciate the opportunity to dedicate to the community of nonprofits to help them make a difference. They understand that being a successful large company, they bring talents and organization that the smaller nonprofit like us can't even imagine. Abington makes it happen and it's amazing.

According to Lori, employees of a firm offer a system of support for the nonprofit. That is, nonprofits benefit from the various forms of corporate philanthropy offered by firms. Additionally, Lori pointed to the responsibility large firms have to provide guidance for smaller organizations, such as nonprofits. As a result, the partnership formed between the nonprofit and the firm benefits the local community. As an example, Figures 52 and 53

illustrate how, through volunteer efforts, Abington not only improved the appearance of the nonprofit's facility, but also provided tangible resources (e.g., pre-cut wood) for the nonprofit to utilize when hosting after school programs for local youth.



*Figure 52. Participants Clean and Clear the Exterior Overgrown Community Gardens Next to the Pallets of Wood to be Cut and Donated to the Nonprofit (Photo by author)*





*Figure 53. Participants Clean and Paint a New Shop Space to House Donated Wood and Supplies. (Photo by author)*

Indeed, it is hoped that through the efforts of the EVP activities, and resources associated with it, the community may be positively impacted. For example, Lori discussed how the EVP can further establish community pride and bring stakeholders together.

[The City] is so happy about all the wonderful things that happened that day. Our videographer was honored to be invited to do some work showcasing all that was happening. It makes us all feel proud of all the community we have and how we are all making a difference.

In this excerpt, Lori describes others, such as the videographer, being brought in to record and share the benefits afforded by the EVP. It is clear from the interpretation of the data that an EVP is not actualized in a vacuum. Instead, it is achieved through the work of

multiple stakeholders coming together as one to meet the needs of the broader community.

In sum, once the relationship between a firm and nonprofit is established, the EVP can support the community based on shared interest in addressing its needs. Thus, a relationship may blossom into a partnership. As a result, greater awareness of community needs arise from the interactions between employees of the firm and the nonprofit. Participants are motivated to make a difference and seek the ability to create change while addressing important issues facing local communities. To this end, in the next section, effects of the EVP on the broader community are explored in greater depth.

### **A Call to Action**

According to the literature, some firms are looking to move beyond serving the community from just a business operations standpoint, to building civic engagement and strengthening the economic sustainability of their local communities (Kim et al., 2014; Pelozo et al., 2009). Indeed, firms that actively engage in philanthropy not only create economic gains but also make a social and environmental impact (Porter & Kramer, 2002). As such, the events associated with EVPs can be seen as a call to action, in as much as each EVP observed in this dissertation impacted multiple stakeholders in various ways. Although the firm and the nonprofit share the expectation that the EVP will benefit the community, the impact observed was actually twofold. Interpretation of data reveals that among participants there is a distinct personal need to help others. Subsequently, participants feel empowered to try to make a difference in their local communities, therefore satisfaction is gained from participation. In the following section, two

subthemes are explored to better understand the impact EVPs have on stakeholders: (1) *Individual Reward* and (2) *Creating Change*.

### **Individual Reward**

Based on the data, it is clear that EVPs can have a positive impact on multiple stakeholders. As discussed in the previous chapter, participants in this study revealed an intrinsic motivation to help others when choosing to participate in an EVP. The satisfaction achieved through the experience of the EVP, in turn, provides participants with a sense of internal reward. That is, the EVP appears to prompt personal feelings of joy and accomplishment through the act of helping others. For example, when asked about the time devoted to volunteering, Ava stated, "...it was spent doing good for others." In a similar vein, Olivia discussed the benefits of the EVP stating, "...it is productive any time you can help others." Clearly, participants see some degree of value in participating in EVPs. As a result, they associate it with reward for the individual along with benefit to the community.

Although the EVP is aimed at helping others, when asked about the EVP event, participants, as employees across the four firms in this study, focused a lot on the individual satisfaction achieved from participation in service activities. For example, Carla talked about herself, stating,

I liked the camaraderie of the people working on the project. I enjoyed being inside because the last project I did was outdoor and today it's hot out there. There really wasn't anything I didn't like about the project. I'll do it again.

Indeed, Carla discussed enjoying the activity, however she repeatedly mentioned “I,” thereby focusing on the personal benefits of the event. That is, when discussing the act of helping others, she revealed a strong individual drive. At times, gratification was achieved by meeting other personal needs, such as a break from the monotony of work, or the convenience of location. That is, for some participants, it is the location of the EVP that provides a reward. According to Layla, she “...liked being outside and getting to see a new part of the city,” along with the enjoyment of getting out of the office, in order to participate in the EVP. Accordingly, the pleasure derived from the EVP comes from experiencing something different than “work.” Other participants enjoy the opportunity to step away from their “desks” and to help others right there in the office. Leslie stated, “[I] liked that it was inside and at our location.” She did not have to leave the building to participate in the EVP event, which for Leslie was a way to gain satisfaction from the activity, while knowing that her engagement is benefiting the local community.

For some participants, witnessing an immediate response from the EVP event is the reward. For these participants, the impact of the EVP on the community must be palpable. As stakeholders, not just of the firm, but of the broader community, some employees are provided the opportunity to choose which particular EVP is most personally rewarding. For example, Erin references an annual service project that her store participate in during the Winter Holiday season,

I like to get out and be engaged. Every December our store adopts a family in need...to give children a Christmas. It's my favorite. The kids want the simple things that we take for granted, like socks. I enjoy dropping off the presents to see the kid's faces.

A smile on a child's face leads to fulfillment for Erin, and, in turn, she continues to participate, in the hopes she will experience the same sense of enjoyment as the children. Similarly, when asked what she enjoyed most about the EVP event held in conjunction with the *BMSA Seacoast*, Alice said, "Hearing the kid's experiences and what they learned." Thus, when working directly with community members, via an EVP employees of a firm can receive immediate feedback regarding the impact of their volunteer efforts. However, it appears that satisfaction was not limited to the employee volunteers. As Mary, who is the executive director of *Girl Power* explained, she felt an "Enormous relief knowing that we had so much help tackling tasks that keep me from the mission of empowering inner city girls." Based on Mary's comments, as well as many of the participants who are employees, it is clear that EVP activities can have multiple benefits for multiple stakeholders.

For some participants, it is the expectation of helping others that prompts positive feelings from volunteering in an EVP event. This is the case for Sandy, as she explained, "Just helping or volunteering makes me feel good." That is, the act of serving others offers a personal benefit beyond the help it provides to others. In the same vein, Leah simply stated, "Being able to give back is rewarding." Another participant, William, discussed the pride felt by such activities, "Helping others to help others is always a good thing. Made me glad to work for my company." That is, EVPs can provide intrinsic value to both employees and the community, while reflecting well on the firm. Community members representing nonprofits also discussed the personal accomplishment achieved through the EVP. Faith coordinates EVP events for local firms in the city and personally

participates with each group. When asked about the personal benefits associated with the EVP event, she said, “I always feel good when I contribute to the community.” Thus, through civic engagement, multiple stakeholders revealed the extent to which the “good feelings” that come as a result of helping others is a big reason for participating.

In addition to feeling good through EVP events, participants talked about the benefits of volunteering. Interestingly, Karen discussed improved job performance due to her participation in EVP events, stating, “The sense of accomplishment and of doing good provides energy and emotion that makes me perform better at my day-to-day job.” Thus, the actions of the EVP go beyond helping the community, to helping the individual employees of the firm. However, employees as participants are not the only stakeholders who gained a sense of accomplishment. Participants who represented nonprofits also talked about the personal gains derived from the EVP event. For example, Summer stated, “It was a very active day, definitely got my steps in with all of the tours I was leading.” Summer represented the *State Food Bank* and provided small groups of volunteers with tours of the facility, offering insight into the food bank’s daily operations and the needs of the community. Interestingly, she did not discuss the good that could have been achieved through the multiple tours she provided the volunteers throughout the day. Instead, she focused on her personal achievements and in this case, it was getting her exercise for the day. Clearly, the activities associated with EVPs result in a broad range of benefits for participants.

## Creating Change

Based on data, it appears that the ability to observe the impact EVPs have on the community also helps to drive participant engagement. One way this is visibly obvious is through the beautification of outdoor spaces. For example, Madelyn helped maintain the campgrounds of the *BMSA* by “pulling weeds and tidying the garden area” (see Figure 54). She talked about choosing the activity due to its location, but more importantly, she discussed the progress she and her coworkers achieved in just a few short hours, “Outside was great and the weather was great. You can visibly see the results. There were a lot of weeds, but hopefully now the children can focus on planting.” Madelyn talked about the improvements made to the garden and how this will help the campers at the *BMSA*. Specifically it will allow the children who benefit from the *BMSA* to plant new flowers and vegetables due to the clean garden beds, thereby creating a cycle of benefit.



*Figure 54. Pulling Weeds and Cleaning-up the Garden Area. (Photo by author)*

In another EVP event observed for this dissertation, RGM partnered with the *Community Chest* and the *City Volunteer Center* to help beautify a segment of a heavily travelled road. This particular EVP provided participants the opportunity to observe change in action. After the event, several participants discussed a noticeable difference in the appearance of the city street. Angela stated, “I feel as if we did make a difference.” Participants, such as Sam, also felt joy from witnessing his accomplishments, “I liked that we impacted the earth and community.” Connecting with the community members who would benefit from the street clean-up event was important to Gillian. Along with picking up trash on the city street, she stopped and spoke to the neighborhood residents. When asked about the EVP event she stated, “I liked the end result and talking with some of the people in the community. It made a difference to both the environment and the local community.” Gillian highlighted the positive experience with the EVP by focusing on the ability to see the immediate impact she had on the community.

Although most participants discussed positive associations related to EVPs, several offered suggestions for improvement. Sam aided the street clean-up EVP event and in an interview he revealed, “...I didn't like that due to the nature of the event, our team was spread out so you did not connect with everyone who volunteered” (see Figure 55). According to Sam, he expected to connect with co-workers while helping the community. While a total of 12 employees volunteered at this particular event, the participants were divided into two smaller groups, increasing the impact for the community, however, decreasing the chance of meeting other participants. Conversely, James, who also participated in the street clean-up, felt that the EVP event could have



been more effective and the effects on the community could have been greater. James offered constructive criticism, saying "...we could have done more. It took about twenty people to do what could have been done by ten." James thought there were too many volunteers and consequently more could have been achieved.



*Figure 55. Volunteers Spread Out Along the Street while Picking up Trash. (Photo by author)*

Participants often seek a productive use of their worktime in order to provide the greatest impact on the community. In another example, Patrick, an employee who volunteered to create no-sew bags for the homeless, voiced concerns related to the EVP event chosen by his firm, "I would've liked to have done something with more of an impact, but this was a worthy cause too." In a similar vein, Jeanine placed "do not dump" stickers on drain covers. When asked what she did not like about the EVP, she stated, "Feeling like I didn't make a difference." Interestingly, all participants who voiced

concern regarding the effectiveness of the EVP event, and therefore the ability to maximize change, worked for RGM. This points to how important it is that the EVP effectively utilize employee time to maximize both their sense of internal reward and the results for the community.

In sum, based on the data collected for this study both employees and nonprofit representatives seek personal satisfaction when utilizing EVPs as a driver of change in local communities. It is the intrinsic benefits of the EVP that prompts the initial motivation of participants, facilitating a personal call to action. When the benefits of the EVP event are visible, a greater sense of fulfillment is achieved and participants experience a feeling of reward due to their actions on behalf of nonprofits.

### **A Network of Support**

Nonprofit organizations are often established to address economic and social problems that are not addressed by government entities or forms of assistance. Thus, to better maximize their reach, nonprofits often seek to establish and build a network of support in partnership with for-profit firms. By the same token, according to employees of the four firms represented in this study, nonprofits are often selected because they address issues and/or concerns that align with the firm's particular mission or CSR focus. Firm resources are then utilized to support initiatives aimed at creating long-lasting good in local communities. Based on the interpretation of the data, EVPs bridge the nonprofit with the firm by: (1) *Fostering Hope* and (2) *Expanding Opportunity*. Both are explained in this section.

## **Fostering Hope**

Corporate philanthropy is a type of partnership between a firm and the community in that it acts as a way of giving back to society, allowing people to help themselves (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014). As this dissertation shows, EVPs are one way that firms support communities through philanthropy. By helping those in need and fostering hope for a better future, a firm's employees are positively impacting local communities. Oliver, who volunteered at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility, talked about why EVP participation matters, "We provide hope. We are strangers coming in to help. Hopefully it inspires them [the residents of the rehabilitation facility] to know someone cares." According to Oliver, the EVP acts as a conduit of hope, offering a caring approach to meeting that specific community need.

According to Wymer and Samu (2003), a for-profit firm often enters into a partnership with a nonprofit organization for favorable publicity, enhanced public goodwill, and greater public awareness of the firm. However, EVPs also create a broader awareness of community needs via the firm-nonprofit partnership. That is, through the EVP, volunteers are introduced to the range of community needs that exist. Thus, participants who represent the community were specifically asked to share their understanding of community need and how those needs are addressed by the nonprofit. Tammy, who is the volunteer coordinator for *Second Chance* talked about how the nonprofit addresses the needs of disadvantaged women and that there are multiple organizations working together to facilitate access to necessary services. She said,

We empower women to achieve economic independence. We are accessible. We are located in a building that meets the needs of women and children, it also houses the Family Justice Center. The mayor's wife recommended the location for us, she's on our board.

According to Tammy, it is important for help to be accessible to those who need it. While Tammy, who represents the nonprofit, can clearly communicate the help offered by *Second Chance*, interviews with employee volunteers also revealed an understanding of the nonprofit's purpose. That is, the EVP can have an effect on shaping an individual's understanding of a nonprofit's mission and at the same time raise awareness of the needs of the local community. This point was evident when talking with Ellie, a volunteer from Wanderlust. The particular EVP event she participated in was designed to get the nonprofit ready for one of its key community events. She discussed the planned activities associated with the EVP and the end goal, "We set up for an event that allows underprivileged women to shop at a discount and buy clothes for interviews to further themselves." Ellie not only spoke of her efforts to set up the store (see Figures 56 and 57) but also the purpose of the event. By offering individuals in need access to affordable clothing, the nonprofit offers them hope for a better future.



*Figure 56. Volunteers Being Briefed on the Set up of the Store. (Photo by author)*



*Figure 57. Volunteers Prepping the Clothing for the Semi-Annual Sale. (Photo by author)*

In another EVP event, RGM partnered with the *Community Chest* and the *City Volunteer Center* to pick up trash from a section of a city street. Participants from both nonprofits were asked about the specific EVP event and why it was chosen. Angela, who

is a campaign associate for the *Community Chest* stated, “There was a need in this area.” Additionally, she shared her thoughts on the purpose of the EVP, “To clean up trash off the streets of MLK Boulevard. To keep the community clean and beautified” (see Figure 58). In a similar vein, Faith, who is the director of volunteers for the *City Volunteer Center*, discussed the enthusiasm of the volunteers and the awareness brought about by the activity. She stated, “Everyone came out ready to work! People were introduced to an area of the community that they may not have been exposed to. They learned about the need in the neighborhood.” She further explained,

There are several reasons why we did this. One is to raise awareness of the need in that community, two, to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and three, to show the particular community along MLK that it is loved and thought of.

Faith highlights the needs of an area of town that is suffering from economic disadvantage. She also indicates that the EVP event can act as a means of providing hope to those who need it most. This particular EVP event was aimed at creating awareness of an underserved area in the city. Interestingly, when reflecting on the day’s activities, Faith revealed that the EVP was much more than just cleaning city streets, “...the benefits of participating include networking...because it aids in the revitalization of communities... raising awareness about poverty in [the] community.” Faith indicates the importance of bringing individuals together to revitalize an area of town that needs it the most. Employee volunteers who participated in the street clean-up event voiced similar sentiments as Faith. When asked about the EVP and its effects, Sam explained that the purpose was, “to impact the minority community in Greensboro.” Although the EVP was

designed to offer a level of hope, it also brought awareness to those individuals directly involved with creating change.



*Figure 58. Picking up Trash from the City Streets. (Photo by author)*

Through acts of caring, participants associated with the nonprofits observed in this dissertation expressed collective optimism toward future actions affecting the community. For example, when asked about the benefits of the EVP, Faith, who represents *City Volunteer Center*, talked how the EVP brings individuals together for the purpose of doing good, “[The EVP] raises awareness about poverty in our community. It shows the community that people care and cleaning the area will hopefully make people think twice before they litter.” For Faith, the EVP not only calls attention to the current needs of the community, but she also hopes that it will prompt a change in future behavior.

Empathy also arose from the connections formed between firm employees and community members participating in EVP events. For one of the EVP events, Abington paired with *Hope for Addicts*. This particular activity focused on refurbishing the interior space of a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility. However, this activity also allowed for residents of the facility to directly interact with the volunteers from Abington. Michael, who is the executive director of *Hope for Addicts*, described the volunteers as “...very professional and caring.” According to Michael, one of the benefits of the EVP was actually, “...the conversations with the volunteers....They showed compassion for the needs of others.” Figure 59 highlights the interactions between the participants and those benefiting from the EVP event. The rapport between the employees of the firm and residents of the rehabilitation facility was important to both parties. Participants from the firm voiced an appreciation for meeting the individuals that were benefiting from the EVP. For example, Emily stated, “I liked hearing from the people we were helping.” Similarly, Maria, stated, “We don’t always get to interact with those we are helping...it’s good to see who you’re impacting....It’s interesting to see where people come from. Everyone was very appreciative.” In the case of this particular EVP, the partnership formed between the firm’s employees and the community members it serves highlighted awareness of social issues such as alcohol and drug addiction. These interactions also provided participants with a unique opportunity to support individuals and offer compassion to those who need it.





*Figure 59. Employees of the Firm Talking with Residents of the Rehabilitation Facility after Lunch. (Photo by author)*

In sum, as partners, firms and nonprofits support the local community through EVP events. Based on the interviews with participants, the events highlight community need, and at the same time, allow individual stakeholders to show the community it cares. Michael summarized the benefit of a nonprofit working together with a for-profit firm as, “Sharing the needs of others.” He also spoke about the partnership and the obligation of all stakeholders to do more, “I think as a community we are all responsible to better our neighborhood.” Through the joint interactions between employees of the firm and community members, nonprofits are better able to serve the community. Through empathy and compassion, participants provide hope to those who need it. In the next section, opportunities for firms to increase the level of help offered to the community through firm resources are further examined.

## **Expanding Opportunity**

Philanthropy is seen as a form of “community relations,” as it provides a firm the unique ability to use its resources for good (Rupp et al., 2013). Philanthropy also allows a firm to make a positive impact within the community in which it does business (Maignan & Ralston, 2002). As a type of philanthropy, EVPs allow firms to use employees as a resource, and in turn, make a greater impact on the community. Through EVPs, firms are able to expand opportunities for those in need. EVPs increase awareness among employees and broaden community impact by offering a greater number of volunteers to help.

According to participants, the EVP is effective in educating employees about various nonprofits and the support each organization offers the local community. James, who is a senior director for RGM explained, “I was not familiar with the *City Volunteer Center*, it was nice to learn about them and how they try to promote volunteerism across the community.” On the other hand, participants such as Oliver discussed learning how to paint and “how many square feet a gallon of paint covers” (see Figure 60). However, he also acknowledged the purpose of the EVP adding, “I learned that drugs don't discriminate.” Thus, EVPs shed light on the many ways help can be provided to the local community.



*Figure 60. Painting and Home Repairs. (Photo by participant)*

The opportunity to use the EVP as an educational tool was evident when Summer, who is the volunteer coordinator for the *State Food Bank* was asked if there was anything in particular she liked about the EVP. She said, “Yes, it was great getting to know some of the volunteers and helping them learn more about the *State Food Bank*. Abington is a great group of go-getters who do their best when volunteering.” Summer clearly highlights the learning opportunity provided by the EVP event. Moreover, this particular nonprofit was observed to be well organized in its approach to the EVP, which helped deepen employee volunteer awareness of the needs in the local community. When asked about the experience and if anything was gained, Evelyn, an employee from Abington stated, “Yes, I learned how the *State Food Bank* operates....It was impressive.” Participants like Evelyn were surprised by the volume of help the food bank provides and the overall size of the facility and its operations. Karen added, “The food bank arranged

tours throughout the day to give each of us some insight on the food insecurities in [the state]. I did not know that poverty was increasing in our state and that 10% of the population is food insecure.” While the act of packing macaroni and cheese was a “fun” event for most participants, the educational component of the tours provided volunteers with awareness of community need and an opportunity to see the direct impact of the EVP activity.

Aside from educating, a nonprofit has the ability to garner additional support for community needs by drawing attention to the benefits associated with its mission. Mary from *Girl Power* passionately spoke about the impact Abington has on the nonprofit and the youth in the community. She explained,

There’s an extremely long list of benefits, from creating awareness, to connecting folks to our mission, exposing them to the need, helping them see the incredible value in giving back, putting new boots on our little girls. See, the list is long.

The awareness Mary talks about here is twofold. First, the needs of the community are highlighted, and second, the work of the nonprofit is explained. As she described “...our time together creates enormous awareness of our mission and the importance of it in our society.” That is, according to Mary, EVPs can educate firm employees and act as a means of sharing the mission of the nonprofit and the benefits it provides to the local community. Employee participants shared the same sentiment, valuing the chance to feel like they are a part of the broader community through the EVP. As Layla pointed out, “It’s always good to learn more about your community and to get away from the office.” That is, the EVP can be seen as a learning experience, wherein employees use the

resources of the firm to be educated about the needs of the local community through the nonprofit.

A nonprofit that creates a compelling story can also build further support for its mission, extending its reach to multiple stakeholders. In the case of *Girl Power*, Lori who is a marketing manager for the nonprofit, highlighted how publicity from word-of-mouth communication related to the EVP event benefits both the nonprofit and the firm. She stated,

[The EVP] helps the community see how Abington is dedicated to their communities. It also allows us to tell our story to more people. We get to spread what we do to the Abington team and hopefully inspire them and they will become supporters of what we do and spread the word. It's a win-win for everyone.

Lori talks about garnering additional support for the nonprofit's mission and Abington's positive contributions to the local community. Although the good done by Abington is greater than the work observed by the other three firms in this study, interestingly, Lori thinks even more is possible. Specifically, promotion of the EVP event can help to market both the efforts of the firm and the mission and needs of the nonprofit. Lori stated,

The only thing that would have been helpful would have been more of a marketing plan to help schedule and promote the event as well as a PR kit to get out after the event and share. As a small three person operation the marketing end can be a bit overwhelming. Maybe a collaboration using our logos, social media posts from Abington to share on our sites would also help.

Lori thinks that both parties could benefit from public relations. Similarly, Summer, who works for the *State Food Bank*, highlighted EVP events as a source of publicity for firms,

explaining, “It gives them the chance to give back as well as have a photo-op for good publicity about how much they give back to the community.” As a result, by sharing the mission of the nonprofit and the positive impact of EVP events, awareness of the needs of the local community extend beyond the employees of the firm to other stakeholders, possibly multiplying the impact of the EVP event.

Additionally, based on the interpretation of the data, the time that participants donate to help a nonprofit is invaluable to those who work with the nonprofits represented by this study. Thus, another way that EVPs help nonprofits expand opportunity is through the resource of people. Nonprofits in this study often talked about having a small staff and being dependent on volunteers. Conversely, the EVPs observed in this dissertation often consisted of large groups of volunteers, completing multiple tasks. According to participants who represent nonprofits, the EVPs save them time, allowing them to focus on other needs and objectives. As Mary, the program director for *Girl Power* explained,

Abington was an enormous help to us. It would have taken our small staff close to a year to complete all that was done by Abington in a day. We only have three staff and the work Abington completed in a day would have taken us close to a year.

Mary compares the small staff employed by the nonprofit to the larger group of volunteers provided by the firm. As such, it appears that EVPs offer nonprofits increased assistance to complete necessary tasks. It is the additional people-power offered by a firm that can aid a nonprofit in fulfilling its mission and broadening its reach. For instance, Angela highlighted her satisfaction with the EVP event and the street clean-up team of

volunteers from RGM. She stated that the, "...strengths were the number of participants that showed up." Clearly, it appears that EVPs can help nonprofits do more with less.

Likewise, Summer, who represents the *State Food Bank*, talked about the dual benefits EVPs provide nonprofits. For the food bank, the EVP offers the chance for it to grow its volunteer base, as she stated, "A great deal of their employees are part of a young demographic which helps us to grow our volunteer pool that typically consists of older volunteers." That is, by introducing employee volunteers to the *State Food Bank* and its benefit to the community, the food bank hopes to sustain its impact and increase awareness through new volunteer partnerships. Similarly, Destiny from *Second Chance* spoke of the benefit of working with employees from the particular firm. She talked about the previous EVP and compared it to the current one,

We had a strength in numbers last sale set up. This go 'round we had less man power, but overall I wouldn't say there's any weaknesses. Honestly, it's great to have some people that can help with a background in retail. We will host another one in April.

Although she cited group size as a weakness, the expertise offered by the group of employees coming from the retail industry compensated for the lack of numbers. In turn, the increased help offered by the firm to the nonprofit has led to an ongoing partnership.

Along with the benefit of greater knowledge and increased help to fulfill the mission of each nonprofit, EVP events also save nonprofits time and money. According to Michael, who is the executive director of the drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility *Hope for Addicts*, "Abington saved us a lot of work and out of pocket expenses."

Remodeling would have been costly and a burden on the nonprofit and its residents,

however, according to Michael, “Abington, completed the entire project in one day.” Michael added, “They bettered the living conditions of our clients [struggling with] drug and alcohol addiction.” Both the nonprofit and its clients enjoyed improved amenities due to the outcomes of the EVP. Participants involved in the EVP also noticed the improvements. Oliver commented, “We made a huge difference in the appearance of the facility.” The time and effort put in by Abington added value by upgrading the property, and this allowed the nonprofit to focus its resources on meeting other pressing needs.

In sum, many participants, whether employees of a firm or representatives of a nonprofit, discussed the network of support achieved by EVP events. Through the actions of the EVP, firm employees offer hope to individuals who need it most, and at the same time, engagement in the EVPs helps educate them on the needs of the local community. It is through the use of firm employees, as a resource, that nonprofits are able to do more with less. The significance of firm resources, when utilized for good, is explored in the next section.

### **Added Value**

Interpretation of the data collected for this dissertation illustrates the impact CSR, and specifically EVPs, have on local communities. It also highlights the broader implications of such activities for stakeholders, including how these activities can create a cycle of benefit for the firm, its employees, and the community. While the true value of an EVP is difficult to measure, the data reveal three primary areas of added value that are achieved through the utilization of firm resources: (1) *Solving Problems*, (2) *Meeting the Bare Necessities*, and (3) *Financial Benefits*.



## **Solving Problems**

As discussed in the previous section, EVPs address the needs of the local community through a network of support, and effective problem-solving is one way a partnership between a firm and nonprofit develops. Many nonprofits work with limited resources, however, through philanthropy, firms can help expand their reach. As a result, much like the firms in this study, solutions to social and environmental issues can be offered by implementing EVPs in partnership with nonprofits to ultimately make a difference in areas where there is the greatest need.

Due to limited resources, a strong motivation for a nonprofit to participate in a partnership with a for-profit firm is the potential for additional funding (Wymer & Samu, 2003). To this end, participants representing nonprofits often spoke of the lack of funds to address community need. Interestingly, when discussing limited resources, participants often talked about what is gained by the EVP. For instance, when observing the EVP activity hosted by the *State Food Bank* Jasmine stated, “We didn’t have a budget for today....it’s an exciting day for us.” She further talked about why such efforts are necessary, “There is no funding for outdoor maintenance and we don’t have time to do it ourselves. It’s visually impactful for donors, visitors, and volunteers.” The impact Jasmine refers to is illustrated in Figures 61 and 62. The two images reveal the conditions of the exterior facility before the EVP event, and the improvements achieved at the end of the day. The EVP provided a facelift to the exterior of the facility that the nonprofit did not have the resources to achieve on its own. In the same vein, Summer, who is the volunteer coordinator for the *State Food Bank*, also talked about the perceived benefits of

beautifying the exterior landscape of the food bank warehouse facility. She explained, “It allowed the food bank's physical location to get a much needed makeover, which will make the location more welcoming to any agencies or groups coming to visit the food bank.” Clearly, Summer sees the value of the beautification for other stakeholders in the community. Although lawn maintenance, including weeding, may be mundane to some, in this study, such small scale activities had enormous significance to the nonprofits.



*Figure 61. Before Landscaping and Clearing Brush from the Exterior of the Food Bank.*  
(Photo by author)



*Figure 62. After Landscaping the Exterior of the Food Bank. (Photo by author)*

It is also evident that, due to EVPs, nonprofits are able to extend their reach and better help the beneficiaries of their services. *Girl Power* is an example of a nonprofit that provides afterschool programs and camps to neighborhood children. According to participants, through the programs offered by this nonprofit, children gain confidence, which results in value to the community. I observed Mary speak to the volunteers before the EVP event at *Girl Power* (see Figure 63) and wrote the following in my field notes,

She stood up on the platform and addressed the crowd. She focused on the girls who attend the camps and afterschool programs. She talked about how the girls enter very shy and leave saying ‘I am strong.’ Mary said, ‘you can see them change...it’s the coolest thing.’ She described it as an ‘I can do this’ attitude shift. She talked about how the girls are afraid to talk to one another, let alone pick up a power tool. She said at the end, the girls are social and confident. ‘It’s a game changer in each girl’s life. That’s what I do and why I do it.’

Mary offered an inspirational speech to the participants of the EVP. Clearly, she hopes that by sharing the experiences of the children who benefit from the program she can inspire hard work and full participation throughout the day. Indeed, Mary's speech obviously had a positive impact on the participants (Figure 64). For example, when asked if she would participate again, Vanessa stated,

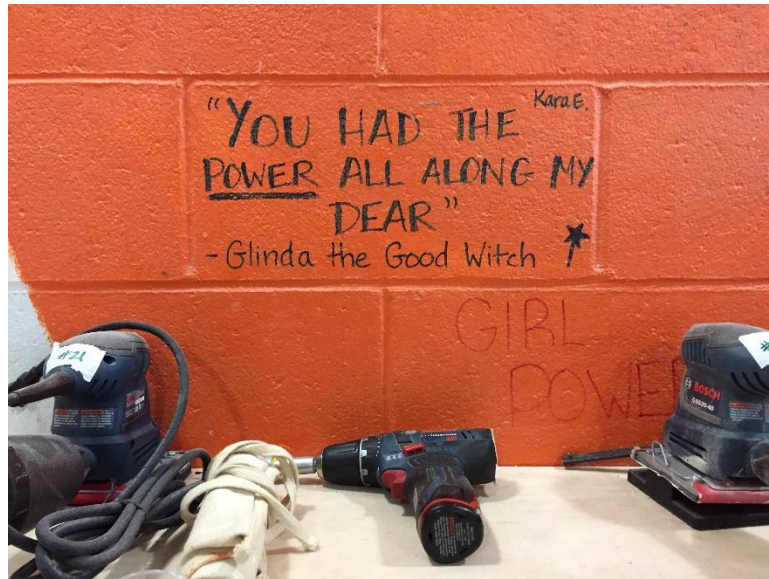
I liked the meaning behind it and how we helped the organization with a year's worth of work so they could use their resources to make a bigger impact with more girls. It was very time consuming but a productive use of time as it demonstrated leadership and commitment from a job performance and growth perspective while giving back to a good cause.

Vanessa clearly gained an understanding of the nonprofit and the importance of the services it provides. She also sees the value that an EVP provides the nonprofit and community members, alongside the benefit to her as an employee of the firm.



*Figure 63. EVP Project Director about to Introduce Mary of 'Girl Power' to Participants. (Photo by author)*





*Figure 64. Words of Inspiration Written by Volunteers on the Wall at 'Girl Power.'*  
(Photo by author)

The value created from the EVP event also extends beyond those directly involved with the nonprofit to other stakeholders within the community. While in the field, a community member sitting at a bus stop observed the street clean-up along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. She stopped me and said, “You do beautiful work...have a blessed day.” Thus, the EVP can benefit more than the direct contributors, as it extends to the broader community. Similarly, participants who represent the firm also recognize the EVP event as a means to reach more individuals and offer equalizing opportunities. Teresa, a manager for St. Germain discussed why she chose to participate in a particular activity, “It’s important to mentor these kids, they aren’t learning these skills in high school like I did. I think we have the opportunity to help in a positive way.” By choosing to volunteer and support a particular nonprofit, Teresa recognizes community need and

perceives the firm's resources as a method of sharing the same learning opportunities that she has with others in the community who do not.

Most importantly, the greatest impact was recognized by those participants directly involved with the nonprofits. In an excerpt from an interview with Mary from *Girl Power*, she recognizes the sacrifice of the employee volunteers. Moreover, she notes how a couple of hours of volunteer service equals a years' worth of time to the nonprofit. Figures 65 – 68 illustrate just one of the planned activities at the *Girl Power* EVP event, and highlight the visible difference achieved from the efforts of the firm's employees. According to Mary,

It's an enormous impact. Their employees are given forty volunteer hours a year to work with nonprofits. That time is priceless to those of us on the receiving end. I just want to say that we are so appreciative and honored that Abington has chosen to work with us over the years. I wish more companies could see the value in these partnerships.

As illustrated by Mary's excerpt, nonprofits benefit greatly from the resources of a firm. Additionally, similar to the concept of peer pressure discussed in the previous chapter, she points to the needs of other firms to take notice of such efforts. Although the benefits of philanthropy are difficult to measure, participants that are associated with the nonprofit often describe a positive return on the firm's investment.



*Figure 65. Before Cleaning and Painting the New Workshop Space began at 'Girl Power.'* (Photo by author)



*Figure 66. A Group of 12 Volunteers Working Together to clear out a New Workshop Space at 'Girl Power.'* (Photo by author)



*Figure 67. A Group of Volunteers Working Together to Clean and Paint the New Workshop Space at 'Girl Power.' (Photo by author)*



*Figure 68. After the EVP at 'Girl Power,' the New Workshop Space is Cleaned, Painted, and Filled with Supplies. (Photo by author)*

Another way that the EVP can make a difference in the local community is through utilizing the knowledge of firm employees to improve needed skills. Based on



the interpretation of the data, investing in young people is a common initiative among the four firms and various nonprofits in this study. Nonprofits such as the *BMSA* and *Girl Power* are established with the mission to support disadvantaged populations, eliminate inequalities, and provide youth with leadership and educational opportunities. For example, when Nicole, a representative of *BMSA Seacoast*, was asked about the needs of the local community, she replied, "...youth mentoring, our community's children are classified as 'at-risk'." Additionally, she views the partnership with St. Germain as an effective means of creating value and the opportunity for youth to learn about career development from experts in the field. Nicole described the objectives of the EVP event, saying,

The teens in the counselor-in-training program were able to go to St. Germain and learn valuable job training skills from the staff, including how to dress for an interview, how to answer questions during an interview, and an introduction to the retail business.

She then discussed how the EVP meets the needs of the young people in the community by providing exposure to leadership and mentorship opportunities.

This activity was chosen because the goal of the counselor-in-training program is to give young teens as many opportunities to develop leadership skills as possible and partnering with St. Germain allowed for them to build on the interview skills they have already learned in our program and use those skills in another setting.

In the case of this particular EVP, the focus is on the development of youth and providing them access to job skills to be successful in the future. Nicole further explained, "We're growing the next generation so giving them as many tools as possible benefits the entire

community.” She thinks the partnership between the *BMSA Seacoast* and St. Germain allows stakeholders to be active citizens in their communities. In the same vein, Ashley, who is a manager for St. Germain, talked about how the community benefits from the EVP. She stated that the purpose of the event was, “to provide job skills to underprivileged youth and anyone else who can benefit from it.”

Nicole from the *BMSA Seacoast* described the benefits that mentoring has on those directly involved. She talked about the youth involved in St. Germain’s *Go!* program, “My children had the opportunity to learn more about the interview process and job skills in general, which makes them stronger leaders. It allows our children to experience life working in the real world.” That is, the children from *BMSA Seacoast* (which Nicole refers to as “hers”) are provided an opportunity to practice job preparation skills. Nicole further described the value of participating in the EVP, stating, “I feel like my kids got a lot out of it. It’s always good to take them out to into the community to experience the world beyond our program.” Overall, Nicole’s impression of the experience was positive and she wants to partner again, “I truly liked everything about this event. Next time, I would like to spend more time there.” Thus, EVPs can be an effective strategic approach to filling the gaps of what communities need versus what is currently available.

Although a firm enters into a partnership with a nonprofit to solve problems facing a local community, EVPs cannot do it all. As discussed throughout this chapter, for the resources of the firm to make a difference, it is necessary for EVPs to not only recognize community needs, but to achieve impacts that align with them. However, there

are times when the needs of the community are greater than what the firm can offer in terms of support. Lori, a marketing manager for a nonprofit, offered a detailed description of the needs of her local community.

More training and outreach to refugees, daycare for refugee families, interpreters, and more outreach to those who might feel too proud to accept some help. We need to reach more girls and women to build them up to be confident as they move forward in this world. We need help with the drug and alcohol addiction problems. We need more foster families to help rescue children who are victims of the historic drug epidemic we are witnessing.

Lori identified the many pressing issues facing her community, the totality of which is well beyond the scope of a single, or even multiple EVPs.

Although the firm and nonprofit hope to achieve positive outcomes via the EVP, challenges may also arise. One participant representing the nonprofit, *Hope for Addicts* voiced negative feedback from the partnership. Michael, who is the Executive Director, was asked about the needs of the local community. Although he was cognizant of community needs, he felt the EVP did not do enough to tackle such causes. Although he acknowledged the positive outcomes achieved by the cosmetic upgrades to the rehabilitation facility and the aforementioned interactions between resident and volunteers, Michael indicated that he would not participate in this particular EVP again. This is an interesting response, in that, even though Abington was not able to tackle the larger community needs, such as provide affordable housing, the efforts of the EVP did address some of the nonprofit's needs by updating and upgrading the interior living quarters of one of its rehabilitation facilities.

## Meeting the Bare Necessities

Based on the interpretation of the observation and interview data collected for this dissertation, the partnership between a firm and nonprofit can be utilized for providing the basic needs. That is, EVPs can deliver value in the form of basic necessities, such as food, clothing, and toiletries. As is discussed in this subtheme, participants think that offering basic needs is the first step in helping community members move out of poverty.

When asked about community needs, participants from the food bank often cited its mission to eradicate poverty through the food supply. Summer, who represents the food bank explained, “Approximately 13% of [the state’s] citizens are food insecure, meaning they don’t know where their next meal will come from. The community needs more food readily available to these people.” When asked how the EVP addresses this need, she elaborated by stating, “Abington reached out to us for their annual day of service and wanted to do something that was really needed, something to benefit the food bank itself and something to benefit thousands of hungry [citizens in our state].” Thus, the firm’s focus was on meeting a basic need. Summer also discussed the two different activities planned for the EVP,

We decided the outdoor work would benefit the *State Food Bank* and the ‘mac-off’ would help the hungry. The ‘mac-off’...provided thousands of meals which will be distributed across the state. *Abington* helps us to move more product faster, which in turn allows us to distribute more food across the state more quickly. Additionally, these activities were some of the few options we currently have that can handle a group as large as the *Abington* crew.

Clearly, the primary motivation for partnering with the firm and setting up the EVP was the ability to feed as many people as possible. As mentioned in the previous section,

Abington employees were made aware of the impact that their efforts will have on the community. As Karen recalled, “We made 2,000 bags of macaroni and cheese. Each bag feeds six people, so 12,000 meals is amazing.” Thus, she points to how putting together prepackaged meals provided basic needs to more than just those directly involved with the EVP event.

Although EVPs are typically aimed at providing philanthropy in the form of volunteer service, firms often donate physical items as well. One example observed in this study was Abington’s commitment to donate boots to children in need. By partnering with *Girl Power*, the nonprofit helps provide footwear to children who come from families that many not have the financial means to purchase this basic need. Lori, who represents *Girl Power*, talked about the children who benefitted from the EVP. She said,

[The firm] brought in the troops and cranked it out with precision and passion. We are ready for our school year to teach more girls how to build with power tools and become strong, confident girls and women. The extra boots and shoes that were given to schools came to our ‘Kindness Closet’ and we were able to give some boots to some of our summer camp students who are refugees who needed them. As girls come through we will have clothes and boots to share.

Lori mentions the ‘Kindness Closet,’ which is depicted in Figure 69. The closet houses the boots donated by firms such as *Abington*, to be distributed to children who need them. The boots are an added bonus for the girls who partake in the empowerment programs offered by this nonprofit.



*Figure 69. The 'Kindness Closet' before being filled with Boots from 'Abington' to Benefit the Girls of the Community. (Photo by author)*

### **Financial Benefits**

Employees of the nonprofits frequently recognized the added-value that corporate philanthropy offers the community and, at times, they also overtly recognized the financial benefits of such partnerships. For example, Faith from the *City Volunteer Center* talked about the various forms of philanthropy EVPs offer the community, “RGM Corporation has proven to be very generous to our community with donations as well as volunteers.” As reflected by some of the participants in this study, the EVP event can provide more than volunteer time, it can also provide financial support through the event. As Nicole explained, “Our BMSA was given a grant from St. Germain.” As described in Chapter IV, the monetary grant was a direct result of the volunteer time donated by the employees of St. Germain.

There are other ways that participants equate the volunteer time provided by firms with financial gain. Destiny, who is the boutique coordinator at *Second Chance* spoke of the economic impact of the EVP event. *Second Chance* utilizes volunteers associated with EVPs for its bi-annual sales events. The event raises funds to support additional programs offered by the nonprofit. Destiny described the benefits gained by the EVP,

This was a set-up day of our annual event. This event is a sale open to our clients. The set-up happens twice a year. Wanderlust comes in and helps with the complete set up of this event, from start to finish. Huge impact on me because without the help I would be looking at a week's worth of work to do myself. It greatly impacts us. Because I have the help from this group I am able to pay attention to every detail. Which in return brings great money back into the boutique.

Destiny mentions the “great money” that can be earned due to the help of the volunteers and the sales event. Even though the EVP provided volunteer assistance, the end result was financial gain for the nonprofit.

Conversely, on occasion, the value of the EVP event is not always recognized by community stakeholders. While Amy, who is the communications manager for the *Cancer Walk Foundation* said, “Without volunteers we could not do what we do” she did not see the benefit of working with St. Germain. That is, when asked about the benefits of partnering with the firm, she responded “none.” However, she followed her response with, “We partnered with dozens, we are grateful.” That is, in the case of this EVP, due to the size and scope of the event, the nonprofit was unable to associate a specific firm with the help it offered, and, while appreciative of the firm’s time and efforts, she views the

individual impact by the firm as minimal. Amy's response provides a unique perspective on the value of EVPs.

Overall, nonprofit organizations are often established to address economic and social problems that government assistance does not offer. It appears that firms seek to utilize CSR efforts, like EVPs, to fill such voids. Participant responses throughout this chapter demonstrate multiple stakeholder views on the impact that EVP events have on the broader community. EVPs are used to bridge relationships and form partnerships between firms and nonprofits. Internal stakeholders, in the form of firm employees, and external stakeholders, in the form of nonprofits and community members, benefit from the connections that are formed. The EVP acts as a catalyst for change, offering support to those who need it, and increasing value for the broader community. As revealed through the interpretation of data, the first step in creating community impact is for a firm to develop a relationship with a nonprofit. Through communication, planning, and flexibility that relationship can grow into a partnership. It is through this partnership that firms can react to community need, and, in turn, the EVP becomes a call to action, with both employees of the firm and community members receiving something from it. As such, a network of support is achieved and it appears that participants, including employees and nonprofit representatives, recognize the value that EVPs offer the community more broadly.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the EVP as CSR was explored in terms of its impact on the broader community. A reciprocal relationship between the nonprofit and firm emerged



and was discussed as a vehicle for understanding the impact EVPs have stakeholder groups. In the next chapter, the theoretical significance of the interpretation relative to the literature reviewed in Chapter II, as well as the conceptual framework used to guide this dissertation, is discussed.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **THEORIZING THE INTERPRETATION**

To explore EVPs as CSR among apparel firms and to achieve the necessary depth and overall understanding of the value of such programs for stakeholders, multiple methods were utilized in this dissertation. Interpreting the experiences of participants through the use of multiple methods highlights the impacts of the EVP for the four firms observed in this study, their employees, and the communities they serve. The findings give shape to the twofold purpose of this dissertation, which is: (1) to explore EVPs as CSR among apparel firms, and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the community it serves. In order to fully address the twofold purpose of this study, in this chapter, the theoretical implications of the findings are tied back to the literature and conceptual framework discussed in Chapter II.

The conceptual framework (see Figure 70 below) developed and presented in Chapter II represents the interrelationships between each concept introduced in this dissertation. The figure depicts the end result of a firm's EVP as CSR strategy, along with the impact this strategy has on multiple stakeholders and the broader community. The theories discussed as important to shaping this study are examined in this chapter in

light of the thematic interpretation of the data, and are considered relative to the broader research goals and objectives guiding the study. Thus, in this chapter, the conceptual relevance of the thematic interpretation is discussed. To this end, the chapter is divided into two parts: (1) *Building the Foundation* and (2) *Connecting Stakeholders through Volunteerism*.

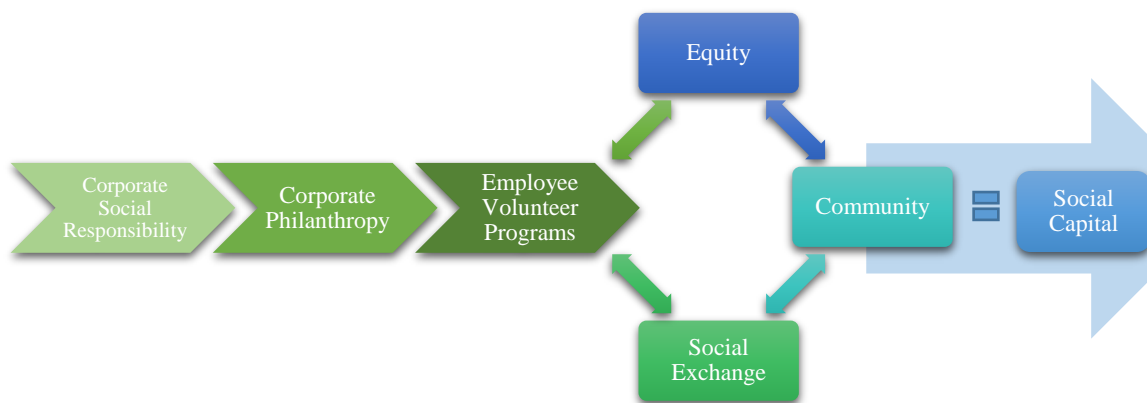


Figure 70. Conceptual Framework: Social Capital as an Outcome of CSR

Situated on a continuum, the topics of CSR, corporate philanthropy, and EVPs provide the foundation for firms looking to positively impact their local communities. In the first part of the chapter, *Building the Foundation*, the conceptual relevance of the thematic interpretation for understanding CSR is discussed. Interpretation of the data revealed common motives of CSR across the four firms, with CSR and philanthropy being linked to the firm's mission. Through the strategic application of firm resources, community needs are met. Thus, this section addresses the first objective of this study, which is to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry.

In the second part of the chapter, *Connecting Stakeholders through Volunteerism*, I discuss the theoretical considerations of the thematic interpretation relative to the remaining three objectives of this study, which are to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy, to examine the employee perspective on the EVP, and to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community. As such, the conceptual framework focuses on the social capital accrued through EVPs, and as explained by equity theory (Adams, 1963) and social exchange theory (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans, 1961). Together, the theories offer an understanding of EVPs as CSR, and the outcomes achieved through firm-stakeholder relationships.

### **Building the Foundation**

As discussed in Chapter II, CSR is the foundation and guiding principle for firm engagement in socially responsible action. As such, the ethical and discretionary responsibilities of firms are represented by corporate philanthropy, which is a type of CSR (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991). One way firms apply CSR strategy through corporate philanthropy is in the form of employee volunteerism. This strategy is represented by the EVPs observed in this dissertation. An explanation of CSR through the lens of corporate philanthropy, and specifically EVPs, is a dimension that is lacking in the literature. Thus, in this section, corporate philanthropy as CSR is examined through EVPs, and specifically from the perspective of participants as stakeholders (employees and community members).

As discussed above, the first objective of this study is to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry. To this end, the following guiding research question was developed: *How is corporate philanthropy, as a form of CSR, viewed by stakeholders?* This question is used to frame the discussion of how the data relate to the literature presented in Chapter II. The following discussion explores how the thematic interpretation can be further explained through the literatures on CSR, corporate philanthropy, and EVPs. Social change, as the desired outcome of EVPs, is represented by the collective value of CSR formed by the interconnected relationships between a firm's mission and the application of its resources. In the case of this dissertation, these resources are the volunteer efforts by firm employees. Such efforts create value by helping to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders while impacting the broader community. As seen in Figure 71, each dimension intersects with the other two, collectively forming the basis of a firm's actions. Each dimension is discussed in turn and presented in the following three sections: (a) *Philanthropic Mission: A Culture of Giving*, (b) *Resources: Sharing the Wealth*, and (c) *Desired Outcomes: Changing the Community for Good*.



*Figure 71. Building the Foundation of EVPs as CSR*

### **Philanthropic Mission: A Culture of Giving**

Review of the pertinent literature on CSR in Chapter II revealed that some firms engage in CSR initiatives to address the needs of society (Davis & Blomstrom, 1975; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). That is, CSR is the guiding principle and basis for ethical and discretionary actions of a firm. Although many activities constitute CSR, this dissertation explored philanthropic efforts as an optional initiative that firms choose to engage in. Likewise, philanthropy is positioned as a way for firms to address the needs of local communities. Interpretation of the data revealed that a desire to “do good” is a common motive for CSR in general, and for corporate philanthropy in particular. Moreover, based on the four firms observed in this dissertation, philanthropic initiatives are often guided by the firm’s mission and values. As a result, a culture of giving is established and maintained within the firm. As discussed in Chapter IV, one way firms implement philanthropic strategy is through EVPs. Accordingly, a firm is able to meet the needs of and make a difference in local

communities through volunteerism. More importantly, findings highlight that such efforts are important to employees. According to Ava, an employee with Wanderlust, it is important for firms to “...make time to give back, it’s not just all about gaining.”

As discussed throughout this dissertation, CSR is grounded in the interwoven relationship of people, planet, and profit, also known as the 3Ps framework or *Triple Bottom Line* (Elkington, 1997). Moreover, the literature on CSR in the retail industry emphasizes society’s expectations of a firm to fulfill civic duties applicable to the 3Ps framework (Jones, Comfort, & Hiller, 2011; Wilson, 2015). As stakeholders, employees appear to have similar expectations of their employers. Elizabeth, an employee with RGM, shared the importance of the 3Ps when discussing firm responsibility, “To me, corporate responsibility means a company has an ethical obligation to have work practices that help to maintain the environment and a social responsibility for inclusiveness for their employees and their consumers.”

Participants, as employees of apparel firms, clearly recognize the importance of CSR and that CSR initiatives are linked to firm strategy. For example, Gillian, an employee at RGM, discussed the various programs resulting from the firm’s focus on sustainability. She explained,

Reducing our trash, moving to recyclable products, ensuring our manufacturing processes are low energy usage or reusable energy and are leaving the environment better than when we started with cleaner water, ensuring our global facilities have fair labor standards, and volunteering to ensure our community is a better place.

She went on to say, “I love how socially conscious our company is.” In sum, Gillian recognizes the multiple dimensions of CSR and the impact such efforts have on society. Thus, findings of this study support the recommendation made by Jones, Comfort, and Hiller (2011) regarding an integrated approach to sustainability. Interestingly, similar to other participants in this study, Gillian links her personal feelings about CSR to the strategies of the firm, and even uses the phrase, “I love” to communicate this viewpoint. As such, the interpretation of the data in the present study supports previous findings linking employee awareness of CSR initiatives with positive perceptions of the firm (Korschun et al., 2014; Sen et al., 2006).

Winston’s (2015) study found that CSR in the retail industry continues to grow in importance and that the views on how firms should embrace social responsibility continues to diversify. The interpretation of the data collected for this dissertation supports these findings, however, this dissertation is one of the first to examine EVPs among firms in this industry. According to the literature, employees expect firms to “do more,” further creating demand for CSR (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) and as employees of apparel firms, participants in the present study shared views that reinforce these findings. For instance, Alice, who is an employee of St. Germain stated, “[The firm] seems like it is always growing and continues to keep up with social responsibility of what is going on in the world.” It is evident that participants are witnessing an evolution in CSR strategy, with firms continuing to implement and expand their CSR initiatives. Indeed, according to Carla, “It is a corporation’s responsibility to make the world in



which we live a better place.” To this end, Carla points to a few strategies employed by her firm,

RGM purchased renewable energy credits. There are initiatives for products made with recycled, organic, or renewable materials and processes in production that use less water. RGM has a corporate Code of Business Conduct and our basic core values include honesty, integrity, and respect for others. The smaller initiatives include recycling and composting in local offices and encouraging involvement in local projects....I feel that all of these initiatives and the involvement help to make communities, and the world a better place to live.

It is clear that participants want firms to act responsibly by reinvesting profits to aid stakeholders, including the community. Similarly, James, an employee at RGM, shared his opinion on how a firm is accountable for its actions,

[CSR is] a corporation’s understanding that they have a tremendous impact on the society with in which they operate and subsequently acting in such a way that recognizes that in a positive way. Corporations have a greater responsibility than just profit and shareholder return, they can literally change the world and be a force for good.

The statements made by Carla and James reflect similar thoughts shared by other employees interviewed in this study. Thus, by looking at the bigger picture, firms can proactively impact communities through CSR, further supporting the idea that CSR is an expectation rather than exception among stakeholders today (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).

According to the management literature, it is the employees of a firm who actually execute CSR initiatives (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). However, based on the interpretation of data collected for this dissertation, it appears that employees also want to

be a part of the CSR decision-making process. This notion reflects Lam and Khare's (2010) idea that employee involvement and empowerment contributes to CSR initiatives. For example, Rose, an employee with RGM stated, "[the firm] encourages and empowers associates to get involved in service opportunities in the communities where they live, work and play." Participants from both Abington and RGM were encouraged to offer choices when it comes to nonprofit partnerships. For instance, Kara stated, "I feel that RGM is good at spotting problems and helping causes, even any one of us can bring our cause to the attention of HR and they will try and help." Clearly, some participants recognize the investment firms make, not just in the community each firm does business in, but through the desire that a firm's employees have to help the community. Karen, who is an employee with Abington, discussed the importance of employees in executing CSR strategy, "I think a company of this size should be a leader and continuously give back and teach and lead employees on how to make lasting impacts." That is, she highlights that employees are an extension of the firm, therefore they represent the mission of the firm through the fulfillment of its CSR initiatives.

It is interesting to note that participants frequently mentioned "culture" and "DNA" when discussing CSR and their employers. Similar to the findings of Lee, Park, and Lee (2013), firm culture appears to be linked to employee perceptions of CSR activities. For instance, Wendy, an employee of St. Germain, even stated, "It's what you do." Participants talked about the culture of volunteerism and how their colleagues respond to opportunities to participate in EVPs. Oliver, who works for Abington, stated that everyone volunteers, but not to the same degree, explaining, "Some are advocates

and others choose not to participate beyond the big events.” On the other hand, Alice, who works for St. Germain, talked about preferring to have a few invested employees engaged in the activity over a greater number of associates, “I would rather be with a group of volunteers who genuinely wanted to be there.” Similarly, as discussed in Chapter V, Ashley acknowledged the low level of involvement from her in-store staff, but pointed out the importance of quality over quantity,

It’s never a ‘you must do something’ it’s a ‘Hey let’s give back to the community and have fun with each other while doing so’ kind of thing. Granted everyone doesn’t volunteer, but I would much rather have two super passionate volunteers than 50 people who aren’t passionate about giving back.

As this excerpt and other excerpts from the data reveal, helping the community in the form of EVPs is important to participants as employees. However, they also understand that the level of engagement may vary from person to person.

Although firm culture can act as a catalyst for participation in EVPs, it was revealed by the data that some employees lack “buy-in” and feel coerced to participate. Hejjas, Miller, and Scarles (2018) revealed that, in general, employee engagement ranges from actively involved to disengaged. Similarly, this dissertation revealed a spectrum of attitudes regarding participation in CSR activities. It is important to note that, while volunteerism is traditionally defined as voluntary or an act of goodwill (Wilson, 2000), some participants talked about a lack of choice, or say, in the matter. For example, when discussing EVP participation, participant statements ranged from “I had to be here,” to “It is necessary to be a part of volunteering events,” to “There is a pressure at my company

to volunteer. It's called *voluntoldism*." Thus, this dissertation highlights the need for firms to recognize individual differences among employees when implementing CSR strategy. That is, apparel firms "walk a fine line" when enticing employees to engage in EVP events as CSR. However, there also appears to be a strong case for firms to link CSR initiatives to the mission and/or values of the firm, which can ultimately shape firm culture in ways that could better achieve employee buy-in.

Although each of the four firms chosen for this study represent U.S. apparel brands committed to social responsibility initiatives, the extent of CSR involvement varied from firm to firm, as well as across individual EVP events. As discussed in Chapter IV, Abington shuts down its corporate offices, includes business partners and community members in EVPs, and encourages all employees to engage in several strategically planned events. As such, Abington's EVPs are directly tied to the firm's CSR mission,

Our unique culture and product designs are inspired by the rich New England heritage of our company. Everything we make, every store we open, every aspect of our business has been founded upon the outdoor lifestyle – whether that involves wooded trails or city streets – and an Abington community that thrives on giving back (Abington, 2017).

It is evident that Abington exemplifies a culture of giving, starting with the firm's mission and resulting in its actions within the local community. In contrast, as a corporation, RGM's involvement in the community was not as strong, as revealed by employees discussing the firm's mission. Jeanine, an analyst with RGM stated, "Our [firm's] culture is focused on constant innovation, creating products that are exciting to

consumers and inspire brand loyalty. We responsibly manage the supply chain and aim to exceed the expectations of our consumers. We also foster a positive work environment.” Jeanine clearly mentions consumers and employees as stakeholders, but unlike Abington, RGM does not directly mention the communities it does business in. This lack of community focus was evident when a participant from RGM commented, “The CEO and presidents are not on site this year due to changes in leadership.” That is, higher levels of leadership are not setting the example of community engagement and clearly seem to be focusing on profit versus the *Triple Bottom Line* strategy. Interestingly, at present there is very little research on how firm leaders shape CSR engagement among employees. Although Hejjas, Miller, and Scarles (2018) examined firm culture and employee engagement in CSR activities, the focus of their study was on head office employees. This dissertation therefore is one of the first empirical studies to examine how CSR is viewed by various employees at differing levels and departments within a firm. As such, findings extend previous research on firm culture and employee engagement in CSR initiatives.

Academic research defines CSR as a firm’s activities and status relative to societal and stakeholder obligations (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). However, most stakeholder-driven studies focus solely on consumers as the stakeholder group (Arlin & Lasmono, 2010; Fatma & Rahman, 2015; Grau & Folse, 2007; Green & Peloza, 2015; Kim et al., 2014; Oppewal, Alexander, & Sullivan, 2006). As revealed in this study, it is employees as stakeholders who continue to create demand for CSR action. Thus, findings of this study extend existing CSR

research to previously overlooked stakeholders, such as employees. Additionally, as both business and society have evolved, so has CSR. Today, the expectation is that such strategies are included in all business activities and are fundamental to the firm's mission. This dissertation highlights the extent to which the link between CSR strategy and a firm's mission can influence employee participation.

The interpretation of the data collected for this dissertation suggests that employees of apparel firms view CSR as the interwoven relationships between people, planet, and profit. Participants revealed the importance of linking CSR activities to firm strategy. Moreover, participants pointed to the ways that positive perceptions of the firm can form due to CSR strategy. Such findings illustrate how the stakeholder perspective of the need for CSR has evolved, moving from discretionary action to a necessity that helps meet societal needs. Indeed, as seen in this study, employees expect firms to behave in a responsible manner, utilizing firm resources for good, and specifically to impact social change in local communities. To this end, the first step in building the foundation of a firm's CSR strategy is through supporting the creation of a culture of giving. In the next section, firm resources, when utilized as a form of corporate philanthropy, are discussed as the second step.

### **Resources: Sharing the Wealth**

Corporate philanthropy can involve donating money, goods or services, as well as donations of time through volunteerism (Austin, 2000; Galaskiewicz & Colman, 2006; Madden, Scaife, & Crissman, 2006; Merz, Peloza, & Chen, 2010; Schramm-Klein, Morschett, & Swoboda, 2015; Wymer & Samu, 2003). Philanthropy is regarded as the

most discretionary type of corporate responsibility (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). However, research rarely focuses on philanthropy as a CSR strategy used by apparel firms (Schramm-Klein, Morschett, & Swoboda, 2015). Interestingly, employees of apparel firms relate philanthropic efforts to CSR initiatives as a means to make an impact on the local community (Konya & Hodges, 2017). This is the case for participants in this dissertation, in that they view philanthropy as an expectation and think it is a means of “sharing wealth” with others close to home. Thus, similar to the findings of Amato and Amato (2012), this dissertation illustrates that philanthropy is clearly a means of utilizing firm resources for good outside of the firm setting.

Strategic sharing of firm assets appears to prompt a response from employees as stakeholders, with participants in this study revealing positive feelings about their employers’ philanthropic efforts. For example, Debra, a patternmaker at RGM stated, “I have worked in many companies through my career and I have never worked for a company that encouraged their employees to volunteer and help others on their time. I think that speaks volumes.” Although little research exists on the topic, Porter and Kramer (2002) suggest that philanthropic efforts offer a competitive advantage to firms. The same was found in the present study, in terms of making a firm attractive to employees, as participants recognize the benefits of corporate philanthropy and view current employer efforts more favorably than those of previous employers.

Indeed, firms are devoting more and more resources to social initiatives, positively impacting the communities they operate in and this is happening both at home and abroad (Hess, Rogovsky, & Dunfee, 2002). Although Alri and Lasmono (2010)

investigated consumer perceptions of the importance of various CSR initiatives, this dissertation reveals the importance of CSR strategy to other stakeholders, including employees. As mentioned throughout the thematic interpretation chapters, apparel firms are committing resources to affect change not just globally but also at home, locally. For instance, Vanessa, an employee at Abington stated, “There is the need for large-scale companies to take a stand and make a sustainable impact in their environment, their community, and in the broader globe...assuming they have the resources to do so.” Similarly, Beth, a part-time associate who works for St. Germain points to the collaboration between firms and local communities through CSR action. In reflecting on her employer’s CSR efforts, she stated, “Firms have the same responsibility to helping out the community, local and global, that we all share.” Thus, this study indicates that these particular stakeholders view firms as strategic community partners both globally and locally. In turn, stakeholders emphasize a shared responsibility for others and reinforce the importance of investing firm resources both abroad and at home to “do good.”

Indeed, it became clear that most participants think of their employers as being rich in available resources and expect positive outcomes beyond the firm from the proper allocation of such resources. Olivia, who works for RGM, shared her thoughts on the CSR initiatives of her employer, “Our Company needs to be involved in the community. We have resources that we can share and make a difference.” This sentiment was also expressed by Emily, an employee at Abington: “[CSR is] using your corporate resources to do good.” Similarly, Madelyn, an employee at RGM stated, “CSR is when companies



invest their resources in the communities.” These statements are reflected in the ways that David highlighted how St. Germain reinvests in its communities with its resources,

Corporations have the financial means, as well as the manpower and capacity, to truly make a difference in their communities and world through such activities as volunteering, making donations, fundraising...etc. It is literally their responsibility as a large corporation to utilize their resources for the better. It's unfortunate not all do, but those that choose to make a difference portray a more positive image which resonates with consumers on a more positive level.

It is evident that some participants share the belief that firms must do more with what they have, in that employees consider the use of firm resources to be an investment in the local community. Such findings extend Kim, Ha, and Fong's (2014) investigation of consumer perceptions of retailer CSR programs in local communities by revealing the same idea among employee perceptions. Ultimately, by addressing local needs, firms further increase stakeholder support. Thus, the second step in building the foundation of firm CSR is through the strategic application of firm resources in the local community, or what amounts to the sharing of a firm's assets. In the next section, the desired outcomes of CSR strategy are discussed.

### **Desired Outcomes: Changing the Community for Good**

As discussed in Chapter II, CSR has significance not just for the firm's bottom line, but for society as a whole, including the various stakeholders involved (Lacey & Kennett-Hensel, 2010). Indeed, according to the literature, employee volunteerism is a useful strategy for increasing the effectiveness of corporate philanthropy (Peloza et al., 2009). In the interpretation of data collected for this dissertation it was revealed that

participants recognize the impact CSR can have on the community through involvement with an EVP. Olivia, an employee at RGM stated, “I think the corporate world has to get involved in our communities, financial and through volunteers. We all need to make our city a better place to work and live.” Thus, findings of this study point to how philanthropy can be used as a means of addressing the needs of society.

The thematic interpretation of data supports previous research on firm engagement in philanthropic initiatives to address the needs of local communities as a dimension of CSR (McCallum et al., 2013; Peloza & Hassay, 2006; Porter & Kramer, 2002). As employees of apparel firms, participants often talked about meeting the needs of the local community when reflecting on firm CSR strategies. As Karen, an employee at Abington, stated, “Today, it’s not enough for companies to take care of their employees, they need to take care of their communities too.... RGM participates in various programs throughout the city that benefits many communities.” Thus, it can be said that participants view CSR efforts as an obligation of the firm, with many recognizing the support these efforts provide the local community.

Peloza and Hassay (2006) examined employee motivations to participate in EVPs and the organizational benefits of such efforts. This dissertation expands their findings to include the community stakeholder perspective and considers the benefits achieved by EVPs for multiple stakeholder groups. As discussed in the thematic interpretation, in addition to employees of firms as stakeholders, community members also recognized the impact of apparel firm philanthropy on the local community, and indicated as much in their interviews, emphasizing the needs for partnerships between firms and nonprofits in

order to achieve this impact. For instance, Summer, who represents the *State Food Bank*, talked about the links between a firm and the community,

[CSR] is a company's responsibility to help the community. The community is the reason for the company's success. It is giving back through volunteering, to better the community of their consumers and workers, who make the company's financial success possible.

In Summer's excerpt, she points to how the positive outcomes of the EVP are shared by multiple stakeholders. As discussed in Chapter V, Sandy further discussed the effects of CSR on the community,

It is a great thing. If a corporation has the means to help, then it should help. Especially when the community is the reason for their success. Giving back is always the right thing to do for our community.

This statement illustrates the need for firms to lend a helping hand to the communities they do business in. Reinforcing the statement made by Sandy, Beth explains, "Every business has a responsibility to give back to their communities. They are a part of a social network and should be expected to help out if they can." As a result, firms are able to fill the economic and social voids in local communities by means of philanthropic initiatives. It appears that these firms realize the full value philanthropy can offer local communities. Thus, the third step in building the foundation of firm CSR is achieving the desired outcomes through strategic initiatives. That is, stakeholders view corporate philanthropy as an obligation of the firm to give back to society, with the ultimate outcome being positively contributing to meeting local community needs.

As represented by Figure 71 (see page 249), CSR is the foundation of this study. It is a concept grounded in the three dimensions represented by interlocking circles that include a firm's philanthropic mission, use of its resources, and achieving the desired outcome, which is change. Together, as this study reveals, such dimensions form the foundation of CSR as the first step in connecting a firm and its employees to the local community. As such, the portion of the conceptual framework shown in Figure 72 (below) highlights the links between CSR, corporate philanthropy, and EVPs. Corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR is achieved through the culture of giving established by firm strategy when employees help a firm use its resources for good and support those who need it most. EVPs are one way firms achieve this, as employees actively participate in organized volunteer efforts that ultimately impact society in a positive way.



*Figure 72. Linking CSR to EVPs*

In summary, the aim of this section of the chapter was to address the question: *How is corporate philanthropy, as a form of CSR, viewed by stakeholders (employees and community members)?* Based on the data, it can be stated that CSR is seen as not an optional activity, but an obligation. Stakeholders view firms as being rich in resources. Corporate philanthropy allows these resources to be used for good. Through EVPs, employees act as an extension of the firm, partnering with stakeholders in local

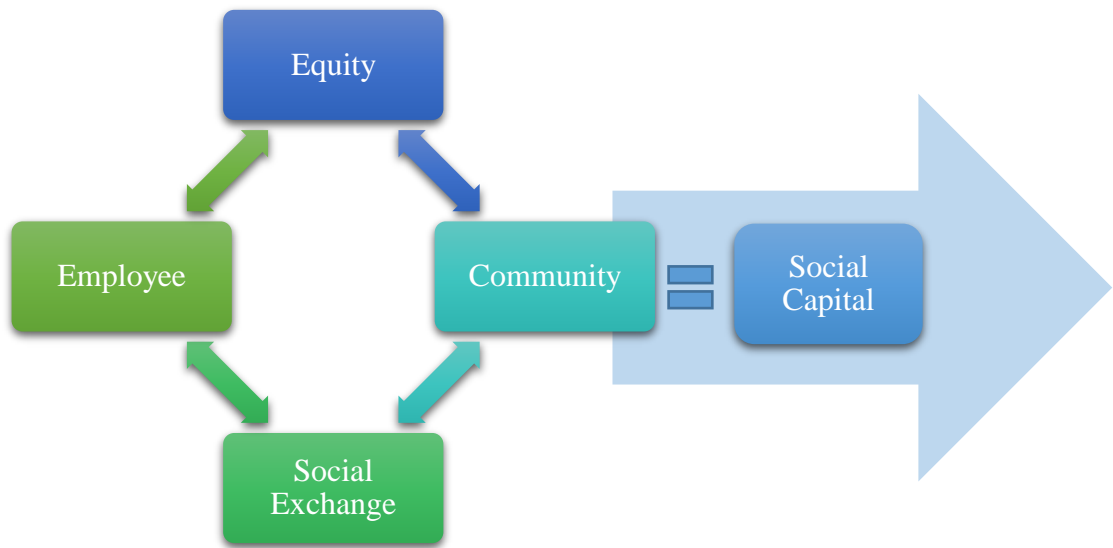
communities to achieve a desired outcome. The next section of this chapter examines the thematic interpretation relative to the concepts of equity (Adams, 1963), social exchange (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans, 1961), and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993). These concepts are important to the topic as they help to explain the motivations of stakeholders to engage in EVPs, the obligation of firms to “do good,” and the value that doing so provides the broader community.

### **Connecting Stakeholders through Volunteerism**

To reiterate, the two-fold purpose of this study is: (1) to explore employee volunteer programs (EVPs) as CSR among apparel firms, and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm’s stakeholders, specifically its employees and the communities it serves. Understanding CSR, and particularly corporate philanthropy, from the stakeholder’s perspective sheds light on the value EVPs provide a firm, its employees, and the community. To address the second part of the purpose, three of the four objectives of this study examine the impact of EVPs through the perspectives of multiple stakeholders and the broader community. Specifically, these objectives are: (1) to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy, (2) to examine the employee perspective on EVPs as stakeholders, and (3) to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community. To address these objectives, two research questions guided the exploration of the thematic interpretation: (1) *What is the stakeholder’s motivation to participate in the EVP?* And, (2) *In what ways do EVPs, as a form of corporate philanthropy, benefit the firm? The employee? The community?* These guiding research questions were used to frame the discussion of the

data relative to the literature on CSR, as well as the conceptual model used in this study (see Figure 70, page 246). The questions focus on understanding the value of EVPs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the communities it serves.

As discussed in the previous section, the foundation of the conceptual framework developed for the dissertation is rooted in two concepts of CSR: corporate philanthropy and employee volunteerism (see Figure 72 on page 263). The conceptual framework integrates equity theory and social exchange theory as a means of explaining the connections established between employees and the local community. Combined, they also help to explain how these connections build social capital as a desired outcome of the EVP. As seen in Figure 73 (below), the second half of the conceptual framework represents the three main areas of literature and thought discussed in Chapter II: equity, social exchange, and social capital. Together, the theories explain the motivations for participation in an EVP event and the outcomes achieved by the employee-community relationship. Based on the thematic interpretation of the data, EVPs create partnerships between firms and nonprofits, collectively creating value for multiple stakeholders. As a result, employees and community members work together as one for the betterment of society, which results in social capital.



*Figure 73. Connecting Stakeholders to achieve Social Capital*

With the continued need to focus on the development of theory within the field of social responsibility (Carroll, 1999; Lee, 2008; Salzmänn, Ionescu-Somers, & Steger, 2005; Wood, 1991), in the next section, I discuss how, through the thematic interpretation of data collected for this dissertation, equity theory (Adams, 1963) and social exchange theory (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans, 1961) explain the phenomenon of accruing social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993) through the EVP. In the following sections, elements of the conceptual framework are explained through the theory, including the motivation to participate and the obligation to give back.

### **The Motivation to Participate**

As discussed in Chapter II, *equity theory* explains why individuals strive for fairness and justice (Adams, 1963; Homans, 1961). Additionally, as a theory, equity examines workplace behavior through the concept of fairness, as well as the balance

achieved among business, government, and society (Heilbroner, 1990; Kabanoff, 1991). For equity to be considered, it is important to understand the motivation to engage in a specific activity. In the case of this study, ten different EVP events held by four different apparel firms were observed. Participants were asked about their motivations to engage in the EVP activities. A key finding of this investigation is that participants engage in EVPs out of the desire for fairness, and that fairness exists when benefits received are in proportion to the effort put forth. This section examines participants' motivations to engage in EVPs and the equity achieved in two sub-themes: (1) *Benefits Beyond Employment* and (2) *It's Not Just About Making Money*.

#### *Benefits Beyond Employment*

The thematic interpretation provides insight into the behaviors and decision making processes of participants as employees who choose to participate in employer-led volunteerism as a means of providing assistance to local communities. Participants looked to their employers to do what is right, yet at the same time, the motivation to participate in EVP events was intrinsically incentive-driven. That is, employees view EVPs as a benefit beyond simply working for the firm. While previous research has explored the effects of volunteerism on employment, this dissertation is one of the first studies to shed light on the motivation for participation among multiple stakeholders (internal and external) and the outcomes derived from the relationship formed through EVPs. Participants' views on the benefits of the EVP take three forms and are explained in this section: (1) *It's Why I Work Here*, (2) *I Enjoy It*, and (3) *Sharing Talent*.



**It's Why I Work Here.** According to Adams (1965), equity explains the individual motivation to participate in a fair and just activity, such as a firm's CSR-driven initiatives. By the same token, employees want to work for a firm with a good reputation and CSR helps increase the attractiveness of a firm to stakeholders (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014). As such, the benefits of working for a firm are often considered during the job search process (Greening & Turban, 2000; Turban & Greening, 1997). Participants recognize paid volunteerism as a workplace benefit provided by the four firms observed in this dissertation, with the motivation to participate explained by the tangible benefits associated with EVPs. That is, to encourage engagement, the four firms offer additional incentives such as meals, transportation, movie tickets, and time off. Although one study sought to predict employee participation in EVPs (Sekar & Dyaram, 2017), this dissertation is the first to examine actual employee participation in an EVP and to explore the intrinsic motives for continued involvement.

Participants talked about not only the benefit of receiving paid-time off to volunteer, but also the reward that comes from helping others. Interpretation of the data reveals that participants view volunteering as a personal benefit and are in part motivated by the ability to make a difference. According to Evelyn, "Abington gives us community service days to participate [and volunteer]. I think this is a great benefit, it is a good feeling helping others in need." It appears that participants enjoy the additional rewards associated with EVPs, with William adding "It's why I work here."

Using equity theory to explain employee motivation reveals how employees view the benefits associated with EVP participation. Indeed, positive associations with

philanthropy can be a driving factor in EVP participation. Findings from this dissertation support previous research by Jones (2010) on volunteerism and organizational identity. As employees, participants recognize the positive benefits associated with philanthropy. For example, Sophia shared her thoughts on her employer's CSR strategy. She stated, "RGM does a great job with these initiatives. It is the most ethical, fair and community-involved company that I have worked for." By setting an example of being community-involved, ethical, and fair, Sophia identifies with her firm and volunteers because it offers her the chance to feel like she is making a difference. Patrick shared a similar sentiment. When asked about why he participates in his employer's various EVP events, he stated,

It [is] fun and for a good cause...Many times throughout the year the company as a whole puts days aside for the employees to do benefit projects to help the community.... It is a good way to promote healthy living to let everyone involved with the company know we are conscious about our environmental impact and making efforts to minimize it.

In this excerpt, Patrick reveals the positive outcomes achieved through various EVP events and the ability to help the broader community, along with bringing awareness of community needs to stakeholders associated with the firm. Findings reveal that employees are looking to make a positive impact through their actions as a fair exchange for their efforts.

Along with insights into why employees participate in EVPs, it is also important to understand the perspective of those that do not engage in them. Although not all employees of the four firms in this study participate in EVPs, those who do see the choice to engage as an important aspect of fairness. Several participants voiced strong opinions

on mandatory engagement in an EVP event. For instance, when asked about his view on employer-led volunteerism, William stated, “[You] should do it because you want to. It is not mandatory.” In the same vein, Karen stated, “I think if it were required that would be stepping over the line. But why wouldn't you do it if your company offers the opportunities.” Similarly, when Madelyn was asked why more of her peers were not present at the EVP event, she stated, “Not everyone has the time inside or outside of work, but I don't believe it should be required, it will not be fun.” Similar to the findings of Rodell and Lynch (2016), in the present study, EVP participation is driven by intrinsic motives. In sum, the participants in this study want volunteerism as a workplace benefit and prefer to have a choice in their related actions. Additionally, participants do not believe that involvement in EVPs should be forced, as it would not be fair.

**I Enjoy It.** The benefits of the EVP extend beyond the firm and broader community to the individuals directly involved with the act of volunteering. Paço and Nave (2013) found that, in general, volunteering is positively related to feelings of happiness. Interpretation of the data collected for this dissertation reveals similar findings. The pleasure derived from volunteering is evident with statements such as, “I enjoy it,” “I will [volunteer] every time we are offered the opportunity,” and “I love to give back to my community.” It appears that the happiness associated with the EVP is considered an equal exchange for individual efforts, and contributes to repeated involvement in EVP events. Thus, for some participants, the positive feelings they associate with the EVP motivates their participation.

When asked about future participation, several participants revealed a commitment to continual involvement. For instance, Carla stated, “I always try to work on some event.” The idea that CSR is not only good for business, but for the stakeholders involved is further supported by participants’ repeated involvement in EVPs. That is, in the interviews, most participants talked about regularly participating in EVPs, with only a few participants indicating that the specific EVP was their first. Likewise, it appears that the four apparel firms in this study continue to increase their EVPs efforts, as participants talked about the increasing number of opportunities that their employees were making available throughout the year. With increased strategic application of firm resources comes the potential for greater impact.

In exchange for time away from the office or store, participants experience camaraderie and connect with others. Specifically, the ability to spend more time with friends and the chance to meet new people is a deciding factor for many participants when engaging in EVP events. Throughout the data collection process, I observed bonding between participants, and that the EVP acts as a forum for employees to engage with coworkers in a new setting. Participants also recognize this benefit, discussing “team building,” “bonding,” and “networking” during the interviews. For example, Ava stated, “It helps others and brings us all together.” Carla also explained why she participates, “I liked the camaraderie of the people working on the project.” The experience associated with the EVP provides the opportunity to engage with fellow employees at a different level and in a new setting. Numerous participants described enjoying the act of volunteering and encouraging coworkers to participate based on the personal outcomes

achieved from the activity. Based on the interpretation of the data, it is clear that employees will seek volunteer opportunities that suit their individual interests, including that of socializing with others. Most importantly, participants view the EVP as a chance to “have fun.” In sum, the chance to bond with coworkers, meet community members, and the overall enjoyment achieved from the act of helping others, all emerged as reasons why participants engage in EVP events, as they provide a benefit that extends beyond a paycheck.

**Sharing Talent.** As seen throughout the thematic interpretation chapters, nonprofit community members frequently talked about the skills offered by the employees who volunteer at EVP events. For instance, retail store employees utilized their expertise as visual merchandisers at the *Second Chance* EVP. Ellie, a manager for Wanderlust stated, “It allows us to use our job skills to give back.” In the same vein, Destiny, the boutique manager for this nonprofit recognizes the effectiveness of the partnership with this particular apparel firm, stating, “It’s great to have some people that can help with a background in retail.” This EVP allowed participants to use their personal talents and skills to help those in the community who lack the same skillset, but nonetheless need assistance.

Participants in this study possess expertise that can be shared with the community and it appears that these skills are valuable to nonprofits. Throughout data collection, I observed several participants engaging in volunteer activities that utilized their professional knowledge and expertise. Likewise, I observed the importance of these skills to the nonprofits. For example, Lori, from the nonprofit *Girl Power*, talked about the

strengths of partnering with the firm for an EVP, stating, “Their organizational skills, planning, and executing shows how their people work on strong teams....They understand that being a successful large company, they bring talents and organization that the smaller nonprofit like us can't even imagine.” It appears that nonprofits gain additional resources through EVPs and seek partnerships that may benefit not only the nonprofit, but the community and the stakeholders it serves.

EVPs were also found to act as a means of talent development for firm employees. Specifically, the time spent away from the office volunteering, can, in turn, further develop the skills of the individual employee. For instance, Beth, who works for St. Germain, talked about what she gained from the EVP event, “[It] helped me practice my leadership skills too.” Karen, who works for RGM stated, “[The EVP] provides an energy and emotion that makes me perform my better at my day to day job.” Both Karen and Beth emphasize the added benefit of the EVP for their own job performance. Similarly, several participants mentioned being asked to lead a project by either their boss or a manager from human resources. The tasks associated with leading an EVP event help employees further develop skills, such as project management, time management, and organizational leadership. Such benefits were revealed in a statement from Vanessa, “It was very time consuming but a productive use of time as it demonstrated leadership and commitment from a job performance and growth perspective, while giving back to a good cause.” As a result, EVPs can offer employee development opportunities, benefiting both the employee and the employer. In sum, the motivation to participate in an EVP is

largely driven by the need for the employee to balance the rewards gained with the costs involved.

*It's Not Just About Making Money*

One finding that emerged frequently within the thematic interpretation is the view that firms are obligated to do more than make a profit. This is a reflection of the *Triple Bottom Line* concept. Although this concept provides the foundation of the CSR framework, participants in this study also revealed an impetus to “do good.” Indeed, as employees, participants recognize the impact EVPs have on addressing the needs of the local community. Thus, the motivation to volunteer, in part, stems from the positive changes associated with the act of volunteering. In the following excerpt, Ashley discusses not only the needs of the local community but also how the EVP meets them. She explained,

I think it's super important to reach out to your local community and provide them with support and job skills where they may not learn those in their schools....It shows that the company does care about the people. It's not just about making money, they actually care about the wellbeing of women and children. It's also impacting others' lives by teaching them a skill...or just as simple as helping a nonprofit run something where they might not have enough volunteers to participate.

In a similar vein, Beth, who is an employee at St. Germain revealed her perception of her employer, “I like working for a company that cares about the state of things. Founders Inc. cares about people being paid fairly. They care about their employees and they care about local organizations.” Participants such as Beth and Ashley emphasize the importance of firm initiatives beyond profits or the individual paycheck they receive,

pointing to the two specific driving factors for engagement in EVP events that emerged throughout participants' responses: (1) *We Are All Responsible* and (2) *Opportunity Matters*.

**We Are All Responsible.** As discussed throughout the thematic interpretation chapters, stakeholders participated in EVPs to balance the inequalities seen within local communities, thereby revealing the importance they place on sharing responsibility. For instance, Ava, an employee with Wanderlust stated "...for me volunteering is being able to give back to those less fortunate. There is always someone worse off than you." At the same time, Summer, a community member who works for a nonprofit, stated, "It is a company's responsibility to help the community that is the reason for its success. It's important to give back through volunteering to better the community of their consumers and workers who make the company's financial success possible." Ava and Summer represent different stakeholder groups (employee of the firm versus employee of the nonprofit), however both see the outcomes of the EVP as a means to provide balance between the firm's success and that of the local community.

Despite the apparent positive outcomes of EVPs for firms (Jones, 2010; Rodell, 2013) little is known about the benefits to other stakeholder groups. Thus, this dissertation set out to explore the viewpoints of various stakeholders to fully understand the collective value of the EVP. In the case of this dissertation, nonprofits are seen to represent the local community, as nonprofits are typically the hosts of the EVP events. On the whole, the perspectives among the nonprofits were found to be similar to those of firm employees. For instance, when discussing the motivation to partner with a for-profit



firm, Michael, from the nonprofit *Hope for Addicts*, stated, “I think as a community we are all responsible to better our neighborhood.” This idea was also reinforced by Mary, who represents the nonprofit *Girl Power*,

We are all in this together and while corporate tends to focus on revenue and new and improved, the best investment in those dollars is for the betterment of those in need in all communities. It is an added bonus to companies to connect their employees for good while having major impact in the communities they serve.

Michael and Mary both highlight the responsibility of the firm to care for the broader community. Additionally, some nonprofit representatives recognize the importance of connecting firms and employees to the needs of the local community, which, in turn, furthers the impact of the EVP on others. Findings of this dissertation shed light on the motivations for nonprofits to enter into partnerships with firms seeking to do more than make a profit.

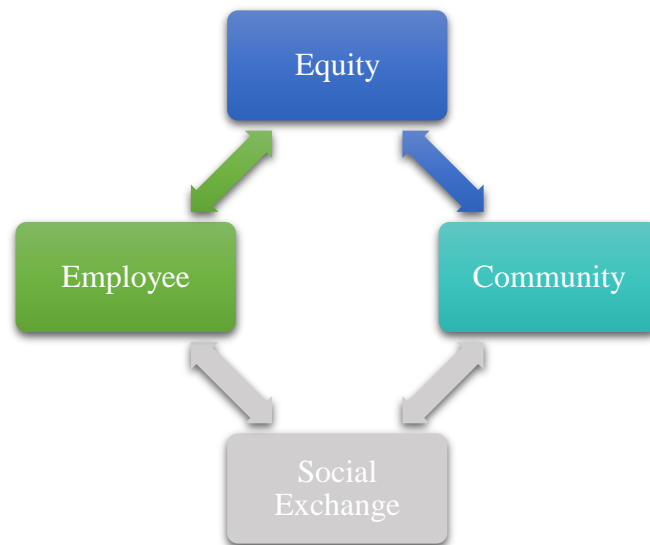
**Opportunity Matters.** Although some participants are motivated by the reward of helping others, it appears that ease of participation is just as important for some. By aligning EVPs with employee interests and skills, the firms in this study aim to make engagement in EVPs easy. As the thematic interpretation revealed, the level of effort relative to the EVP activity was frequently stressed by participants. Supporting the idea of equity, participants often talked about the little cost to self but the greater benefit to others through their participation in EVP events. That is, provided there is ease of participation, participants think it is fair for the firm to ask employees to help those in need. This idea is evident in the following statement by Carla, “I was looking to do

something that was indoors and a little more flexible on time and closer to the office.”

Carla clearly wants to make a difference, but at the same time, wants to ensure that participation in an EVP has minimal impact on her job performance by remaining close to the office. Olivia, who also works for RGM, voiced a similar motivation, “I chose it because it was convenient for me.” Fairness, in this case, can be attributed to the ease by which employees can participate in actual EVP events without fear of compromising their work performance. Thus, an important finding that emerged is that firms can benefit from having multiple EVP event options for employees to choose from to accommodate the various perspectives on convenience.

Conversely, not all employees from the four firms observed in this study feel as though their EVP efforts equated to an adequate use of time. That is, the opportunity to help must be viewed as beneficial. For example, Jeanine, who works for RGM, thinks the event she participated in was an unequal exchange of time for effort. That is, she did not believe the outcome of the EVP was beneficial, stating, “I do not think this was a productive use of my time because I highly doubt a little sign on the ground will prevent waste from being thrown into waterways.” Similarly, while Patrick recognized the need to help the homeless in the community, he reflected on the focus of the EVP by stating, “I would've liked to have done something with more of an impact, but this was a worthy cause too.” Thus, it is important to balance the goals of employees with the needs of the community when implementing corporate philanthropy in the form of EVP activities, as it appears that not all opportunities are perceived as a valuable use of employee time.

In sum, although equity theory has been used to examine fairness in the workplace (Heilbroner, 1990), this dissertation is the first to apply the concept to CSR stakeholders, including employees, and local communities. Figure 74 (below) represents equity or fairness as the shared link between employees and the community. As found in this dissertation, the motivation to participate in an EVP is largely driven by the benefits associated with it for both the employee and the broader community. With the ultimate outcome of the EVP providing balance between the needs and goals of both stakeholder groups, the EVP offers the opportunity for employees and community members to work together to do more. The next section examines the reciprocal relationship formed between stakeholders by way of the EVP.



*Figure 74. The Motivation to Participate*

## **The Obligation to Give Back**

According to Blau (1964) *social exchange* explains the reciprocal social obligations that exist between a firm and its stakeholders, and is defined by give-and-take relationships. In the case of this dissertation, reciprocity occurs when employees perceive their relationships with their employers to be mutually beneficial. Specifically, in the context of this study, social exchange pertains to the idea that the reciprocal relationship between EVPs and the community has the potential to benefit multiple stakeholders. The thematic interpretation chapters provided several examples of how EVPs benefit both employees of apparel firms and the local community. To explore the significance of these reciprocal benefits in more depth, four key issues are examined in the following sections: (1) *The Feeling is Mutual*, (2) *An Even Greater Impact*, (3) *Exchanging Information and Educating for Awareness*, and (4) *Being a Part of the Solution*.

### *The Feeling is Mutual*

As discussed in Chapter VI, EVPs are an opportunity for a firm's employees and the local community to form a relationship. The employee of a firm gives time and effort to the local community, and in return, the community benefits. On the flip side, the community returns the favor with social and economic improvements that offer greater benefits to the firm and its employees. Thus, the EVP acts as a conduit, through which the exchange of benefits between employees of the firm and the local community occur.

Throughout the thematic interpretation chapters, it was revealed that participants recognize both the economic and social benefits of connections formed by firms and the community through EVPs. This finding supports that of Halme and Laurie (2009), who

suggest that there are financial and social outcomes of CSR, and this dissertation extends such outcomes to EVPs. For instance, Elizabeth refers to both the economic and social outcomes associated with the EVP, “It benefits myself and the company because of the team building and it benefits the community because it saves money by not having to pay someone to do it.” Elizabeth clearly identifies the social exchange that occurs through the outcomes of the EVP.

Corporate philanthropy is traditionally a strategic business action of the for-profit firm (Austin, 2000; Rumsey & White, 2009; Wymer & Samu, 2003). However, nonprofits, and the community, are rewarded by the exchange of services that occur when this action takes the form of an EVP event. In the following excerpt, Summer reveals how the relationship is established in the form of the EVP and the benefits that arise,

Abington reached out to us for their annual day of service and wanted to do something that was really needed, something to benefit the *State Food Bank* itself and something to benefit thousands of hungry citizens [in the state]...Abington helps us to move more product faster which, in turn, allows us to distribute more food across the state more quickly.

In this excerpt, Summer positions the EVP event as a philanthropic means to an end. Thus, it appears that the partnership formed between a firm and a nonprofit can provide value to additional stakeholders, such as those living in the area who are in need of food.

It is clear that EVPs foster connections between firm employees and nonprofits through volunteerism. This is evident in a statement made by Rose, who is an employee at RGM, “Active participation in the community works best. Identifying the community needs, then giving back.” Similarly, Mary, from the nonprofit *Girl Power* stated,

“There’s an extremely long list of benefits, from creating awareness, to connecting folks to our mission, exposing them to the need, helping them see the incredible value in giving back...” In these statements, both Rose and Mary highlight how the firm, its employees, and the nonprofit work together to meet a need that is greater than all three. Although previous research recognizes the organizational social exchange relationships among employees (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), this dissertation is among the first to explore them among multiple stakeholders, and specifically with respect to the local community.

Although the firms in this study are eager to help their local communities through EVPs, interpretation of the data reveals the importance of proper fit when doing so. That is, a shared purpose is important to the exchange relationship. As discussed in Chapter VI, the concept of building a relationship into a partnership is important to achieving reciprocal benefits. For instance, Tammy revealed, “We often have groups wanting to volunteer but we are in a small space and can’t meet everyone’s needs.” Employees and their firms are motivated by a desire to help those in need, but the goals of both groups must be met. As Jasmine revealed,

It’s great [to have volunteers]. Sometimes there are too many volunteers, it’s important that needs be met by both...communication and the relationship need to be strong. Sometimes, there are not enough projects and the nonprofit can be overwhelmed, the numbers need to be right....The project must match the outcome.

Thus, the exchange between firm employees and the nonprofit must be relatively equal in value to be effective.

### *An Even Greater Impact*

While the focus of this dissertation is corporate philanthropy in the form of volunteerism, participants revealed that there may also be monetary benefits derived from EVP partnerships. According to the literature, a strong motivation for a nonprofit to participate in a partnership with a for-profit firm is the potential for increased financial support (Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Wymer & Samu, 2003). This was found to be the case in the present study, in that both employees and community members cited monetary gains as a means for providing value to the community. For example, Faith stated, “RGM Corporation has proven to be very generous to our community with donations as well as volunteers.” In one instance, a participant discussed RGM’s sponsorship of a local park and the community events held there. This particular financial sponsorship is another example of the firm giving a donation and stakeholders receiving the benefits. That is, the different types of corporate philanthropy can offer a shared benefit for many.

In a similar vein, participants representing nonprofits spoke of the economies of scale achieved from the relationships developed through EVPs. For example, the *BMSA* cited grants provided by St. Germain. In another example, Mary, from the nonprofit *Girl Power* discussed the financial benefit of EVPs in the form of people-power. She stated, “It would have taken our small staff close to a year to complete all that was done by Abington in a day.” Similarly, Michael stated, “They bettered the living conditions of our clients [struggling with] drug and alcohol addiction....Abington, completed the entire project in one day.” Thus, the thematic interpretation points to the ways that EVPs benefit the community by allowing nonprofits to do more in less time. For instance, Michael

from the nonprofit *Hope for Addicts* stated, “[It] saved us a lot of work and out of pocket expenses.” In the same vein, Destiny spoke of the EVP as a time-saving device, “Huge impact on me because without the help I would be looking at a weeks’ worth of work to do myself. It greatly impact us.” Additionally, Mary, from the nonprofit *Girl Power* added,

It’s an enormous impact. Their employees are given forty volunteer hours a year to work with nonprofits. That time is priceless to those of us on the receiving end....It is an opportunity to invest in communities with the revenue that is generated from successful business practices. Investing in nonprofits benefits not only those in the community but also those who are involved in giving back.

The investment that firms and their employees make in the community is recognized as having value by the nonprofit participants. This dissertation is the first study to reveal social exchange as an added benefit of corporate philanthropy.

Previous research suggests that greater value is derived from volunteerism versus monetary donations (Hess, et al., 2005; Madden et al., 2006). However, findings from this study reveal a need to balance philanthropy in the form of monetary donations with that in the form of human capital. Sam, a manager at RGM pointed to the various ways employees can help,

We encourage our associates to serve through multiple vehicles and allow them to donate their finances as well. Not everyone is an executive and can donate large amounts of money. We are grateful for them, but others like myself can support company initiatives through volunteering. It's important to make an impact and we offer different ways to do that.



This excerpt illustrates that all employees should not be expected to participate in employer sponsored philanthropy in the same manner. Similarly, Rose acknowledged the need to offer various mechanisms of support, stating, “It was easier to give money to the *Community Chest*. To increase our impact, we’ve since shifted to volunteerism.” That is, according to Sam and Rose, it is important to support philanthropy in its various forms, not just for the benefit of the nonprofit, but for the benefit of the firm’s employees. Unlike previous research that relied on the firm’s perspective on corporate philanthropy, which emphasized a standardization of philanthropic approach (Merz, Peloza, & Chen, 2010), results of this dissertation highlight the importance of an individualized approach to philanthropy from the perspective of multiple stakeholders.

#### *Exchanging Information and Educating for Awareness*

This study provides evidence that EVPs act as a conduit of information, educating firm employees on the mission of the nonprofit and the benefits that the nonprofit provide to the local community. In exchange for participants’ time and effort, an increased awareness regarding the needs of the local community and/or the impact of the EVP event is achieved. Indeed, it appears that the participants who represent nonprofits in this study view EVPs as an important opportunity to educate volunteers. For instance, Mary, from the nonprofit *Girl Power* pointed out, “...our time together creates enormous awareness of our mission and the importance of it in our society.” Awareness of the nonprofit’s mission develops through the EVP.

Employee EVP participants also discussed learning more about the community and the nonprofits that support it. For instance, when reflecting on the EVP, Layla stated,

“It's always good to learn more about your community.” James added, “I was not familiar with the *City Volunteer Center*, it was nice to learn about them and how they try to promote volunteerism across the community.” This is a key finding, as it reveals the importance of the firm-nonprofit partnership when developing an EVP, especially levels of overall involvement on the part of both the nonprofit and the firm. Although the interpretation points to the ways that EVPs have the capacity to educate, it is important to note that those EVP events observed without a nonprofit member on-site to explain the purpose or benefits were found to lack “buy-in” from the volunteers. As a result, the participants that attended these events did not associate an effective exchange of time and effort with the EVP. For example, Jeanine, stated, “I don't really know why RGM chose this activity. No one in my group actually knew what we were doing.” Jeanine’s statement highlights how the exchange of relevant information is vital to employee engagement, with possible effects on future participation. This finding also emphasizes the role of the nonprofit in achieving greater effectiveness of EVPs.

Not all participants were able to engage directly with those who would benefit from the services of the nonprofit or EVP event. However, for those who had the opportunity to do so, such experiences clearly provided a deeper understanding of what it is like to be an individual in need. For example, during the cosmetic upgrades of the drug and alcohol facility, employee volunteers interacted with residents of the house. Participants learned that addiction “could happen to anyone.” The stories and experiences shared by the residents allowed for a deeper understanding of this particular community need. Furthermore, participants were able to show compassion and empathy to those who

needed it the most. For instance, in Chapter VI, Oliver shared, “We provide hope. We are strangers coming in to help. Hopefully it inspires them [the residents of the rehabilitation facility] to know someone cares.” Emily stated, “I liked hearing from the people we were helping.” Participants who interacted closely with community members as part of the EVP emphasized the benefits of the activity, much more so than those participants who simply completed a volunteer task.

Indeed, the act of volunteering can be a personal one for employees. As shown throughout the thematic interpretation of the data, involvement in an EVP is often driven by a personal connection. Specifically, engagement in EVPs is a way for the employee to give back. This finding supports those of Gergen (1969), who found that individuals respond in-kind to benefits that may be received. For instance, Sam talked about returning to the neighborhood he lived in as a child, “I grew up on the southeast side of town and was excited about the idea of helping that community.” Similarly, other participants wanted to “give back” to the organizations that have supported them in the past. The *BMSA* is one example of this. Madelyn stated, “My daughter attends summer camps there, and it has enthusiastic and great leaders. The *BMSA* gives back to the community and children.” Through personal connections, the EVP can also be a means of supporting others in similar situations, as in Oliver’s statement, “The drug epidemic is a serious issue in [the state] and I have a friend who lost a son to a drug overdose in 2016.” Anna offered a similar kind of response, “Cancer has not only touched my family, but numerous friends and their families.” It is clear that, for some, participating in an EVP is a means of giving back something in exchange for an experience that they have had or

connection they have known. Such findings can ultimately help firms understand why employees commit to certain EVP events and not others.

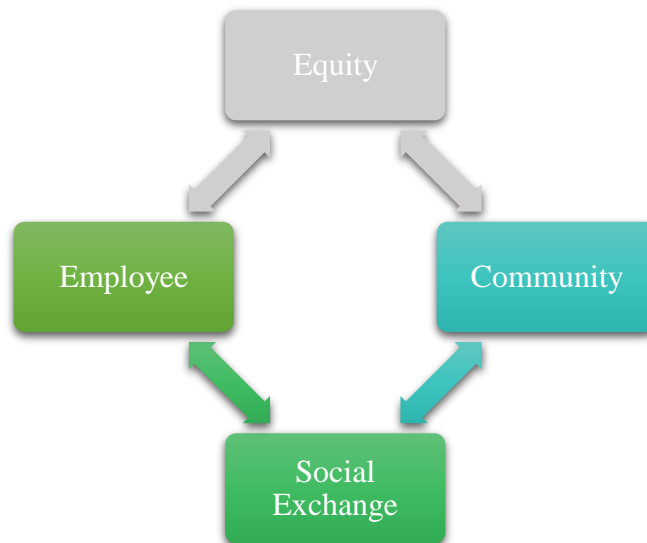
### *Being a Part of the Solution*

An important finding of this study is that firms are interested in the overall outcome of EVPs and how they address specific community needs. That is, the firms in this study connect with nonprofits to solve important community issues. For example, St. Germain paired with youth-focused nonprofits in order to prepare future workforce leaders. Nicole from *BMSA Seacoast* discussed the EVP event stating, “The teens in the counselor-in-training program were able to go to St. Germain and learn valuable job training skills from the staff, including how to dress for an interview, how to answer questions during an interview, and an introduction to the retail business.” Additionally, participants recognize that volunteering in and of itself provides value to the community. Ashley, who works for St. Germain and volunteered with the *BMSA* event stated, “They come shopping here with us or can get a job. I love teaching kids job skills since they don't learn them in school. It feels good to give back to the community by teaching them skills they need to know.” Indeed, this investment of time by the employees creates a cycle of benefit for the community as it aids in the development of younger generations. This finding highlights how firms can implement EVPs to better society, in ways that fill a void not addressed by other means of support, such as municipal or government programs. Thus, through EVPs, firms are able to work with stakeholders to create solutions to community problems overlooked or ignored by public programs.

Clearly, EVPs are not created in a vacuum, and this study provides evidence of the solutions EVPs offer apparel firm employees and the local community. For instance, Edward from Abington stated, “We are invading [the city]. We work hand-in-hand with communities, doing good and doing well, to benefit others.” Mary, who represents a nonprofit, further discussed the partnership, “We worked with Abington to identify a need and create a solution.... It is always wonderful for communities to see partnerships in action.” The importance of identifying needs and providing solutions is also evident in the relationships formed by the EVPs associated with St. Germain. George spoke about why the firm encourages EVP participation, “Creating possibilities in the communities where we live and work is in our DNA.” The chance to create opportunity was reiterated by Nicole who represents the *BMSA* that partnered with St. Germain, “We’re growing the next generation so giving them as many tools as possible benefits the entire community.” These different stakeholder perspectives highlight the partnership formed between firms and nonprofits to solve problems in the community. As a result, this dissertation extends social exchange and relationship-building to include the outcomes that benefit nonprofits and the community members they serve.

In sum, findings of this dissertation reveal that the relationship formed between a firm and its stakeholders during an EVP event is in part explained by social exchange. Figure 75 represents the give-and-take relationship. Employees see the EVP as a chance to give back. That is, employees volunteer their time (give) and, in return, benefit from the improved communities they live and work in (take). Conversely, nonprofits receive help from apparel firms (take) and create greater community value for stakeholders

(give). Findings reveal that through the partnership that is formed during the EVP, nonprofits create greater awareness of community problems and firms and their employees work together to help find solutions. Although social exchange has been primarily used to explain organizational behavior (Kabanoff, 1991), this dissertation illustrates that it can also be applied to activities outside of the workplace, specifically EVP events aimed at meeting community need.



*Figure 75. The Obligation to Give Back*

### **The Common Good**

As discussed, academic research on CSR in the apparel industry has largely focused on global issues relative to supply chain impact, labor issues, and environmental efforts (Amazeen, 2011; Ansett, 2007; DeTienne & Lewis, 2005; Doorey, 2011; Frenkel & Scott, 2002; Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014; Graafland, 2002; Islam & Deegan, 2010; Lee, Fairhurst, & Wesley, 2009; Mann et al., 2013; Yu, 2008). However, this dissertation is

one of the first to explore CSR efforts as philanthropy, and specifically to examine US-based apparel industry philanthropic efforts at home. As apparel firms look to affect social change, this study offers insight into the value of implementing EVPs as a form of corporate CSR strategy, and is one of the first to develop a conceptual theoretical model relative to EVPs.

In the final section of this chapter, I discuss how integrating equity and social exchange helps to explain the social capital that is formed by EVPs. According to Coleman (1988), social capital is viewed as a resource occurring when individuals interact and develop relationships with one other. As discussed in Chapter II, social capital is the collective value embedded in all social networks, enabling individuals to work together for the betterment of society (Putnam, 1993). Firm resources are often used to offer support to communities, therefore through philanthropy, the relationship between a firm and the community can be strengthened, bringing stakeholders together for the common good. As such, in this section, the data are examined in relation to the conceptual framework to understand how social capital is accrued through apparel firm EVP events. This discussion is presented in two parts: (1) *Bringing Stakeholders Together* and (2) *Creating Collective Value*.

#### *Bringing Stakeholders Together*

The primary way to impact communities through the EVP is by bringing stakeholders together. The interpretation of data collected for this study reveals that employees want firms to invest resources in the communities they live and work within, and see their employers as being rich in resources. Community members view firms in

the same manner. Thus, both groups of stakeholders expect firms to support the communities they do business in. As discussed in the previous section, employees and community members are clearly aware of the effects of various CSR initiatives and what EVPs have to offer stakeholders as well as the community as a whole.

According Putnam (2000), there are two types of social capital: *bonding* and *bridging*. Bonding social capital refers to relations within similar groups, such as employees from the same firm. Bridging social capital refers to relations between different groups, such as employees and community members. To address community needs, it is necessary to bring different groups together, but as this dissertation reveals, bonding between the firm and its employees must occur for the EVP to prompt bridging within the community.

It can be concluded from the data that employees enjoy spending time away from the typical work environment and that the bonding associated with the EVP creates stronger connections between employees. For instance, Rita, discussed how her team looks forward to the yearly EVPs, “Every year stores in the district join together to volunteer time for this fundraising event.” Additionally, many participants cited “team building” as a motivating factor in participation. As a result, part of the social capital that is accrued is bonding in nature, or capital formed amongst co-workers, with workplace relationships strengthened through the EVP. Thus, findings indicate that participants gain a sense of solidarity from participation in EVP events.

This study provides an understanding of how employees respond to EVPs as CSR initiatives. Previous research indicated that employees look to their employers for



guidance when engaging in philanthropic initiatives (Coleman, 1988; De Roeck & Maon, 2016). However, findings of this dissertation reveal that EVPs offer a way to balance inequalities between the firm and the local community. As such, bridging, as social capital, occurs between the two through the EVP. That is, the interactions that occur through social activities foster leadership efforts that, in turn, make a positive impact within the community that the business is a part of.

According to Adler and Kwon (2002), social capital can prompt the spread of information, strengthen trust between stakeholders, and build reputations within the community. This dissertation reveals the extent to which new social networks are established through EVP engagement. Findings of this study illustrate the social capital that is accrued through the relationships formed among multiple stakeholders during EVP activities, in that, by connecting stakeholders who are unfamiliar with each other, employees and community members build capital through improved social relations. Additionally, an important finding of this dissertation is that the EVP acts as a conduit of information, educating stakeholders about the needs of the local community. Through the bridging of a firm's employees with community members, new partnerships are formed. Participants learned of the needs of the local community and experienced empathy and compassion when meeting those who need it the most. Thus, through improved social relations, firms and communities build bonds and bridge stakeholder groups, forming social capital.

It is important to note that three of the four firms observed in this dissertation focus on EVP participation as a corporate-driven goal, and it appears that after facing the

obstacle of the “initial first step,” their employees often chose to continue to volunteer. For instance, Barbara stated, “I did not realize how important community service was until I started working at Abington.” Conversely, community members hope to sustain the impact of the EVP event through the new partnerships that are developed. In the next section, the bridging that occurs between firms, their employees, and the broader community is discussed in more detail.

### *Creating Collective Value*

Putnam (1993) posited that social capital stems from networks. The same can be said about EVPs. This study highlights how EVPs form networks among stakeholders and thereby provide value to these stakeholders, whether they are employees who participate in philanthropic efforts or the community members who benefit from such efforts. According to participants in this study, EVPs, as a form of corporate philanthropy, provide the opportunity to help address social issues close to home.

Findings of this study ultimately point to the value that corporate philanthropy as CSR creates for employees as stakeholders. This value is evident in a statement by Olivia, “A company that is invested in their community is more likely to be invested in me.” Additionally, EVPs, as a CSR strategy, provide an outlet for employees to be of service. An important finding of this study is that employees want to be of service and want to engage in EVPs that affect local communities. For instance, Sophia sees EVPs as an employee benefit, “This is the best company to work for...we are always doing something to help the community.” Thus, some employees view the philanthropic efforts of the firm as an added value that comes from working for the firm. It was also revealed

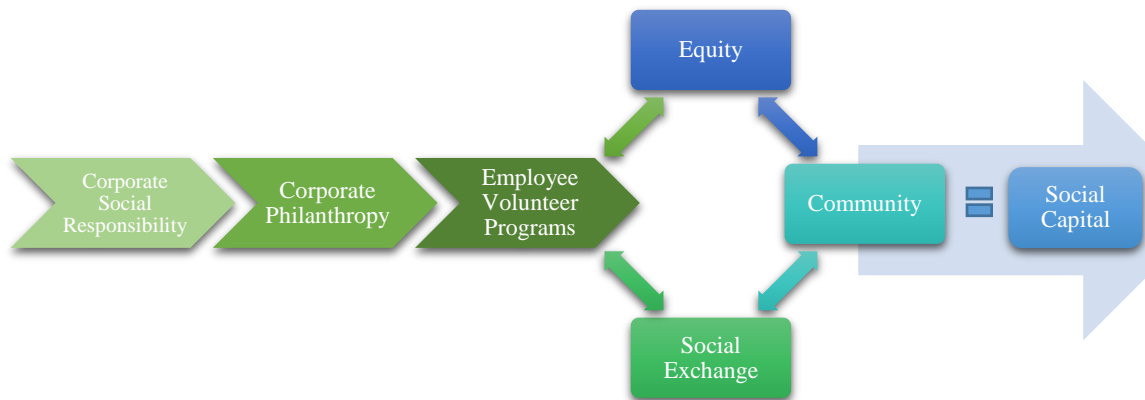
that, through the concept of social exchange, if a firm is “doing good,” employees feel obliged to reciprocate and participate in firm initiatives that help the community. Likewise, when a culture of giving is established by a firm, its employees are encouraged to engage in philanthropic activities like EVPs as a means of giving back.

According to the literature, gaps exist in terms of the social consequences of CSR initiatives (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). However, the data collected for this dissertation indicate that when it comes to corporate philanthropy as CSR, particularly EVPs, there is a direct link between firm efforts and social benefits. This is particularly true when an apparel firm joins with a nonprofit to address a specific social problem identified as important by both. For example, Abington’s partnership with *Girl Power* was created to bring awareness to STEM education and to tie-in Abington’s redesigned women’s work boot. Lori, who represents the nonprofit *Girl Power* talked about the importance of EVPs, “CSR is looking beyond just profits and having an invested interest in the community that your company is in. It is realizing we are all in this boat together and need to support each other for the betterment of mankind.” In the same vein, St. Germain partnered with the *BMSA* as a means of developing future leaders, with the hopes that more young people would become interested in a retail career. For social capital to accrue via the EVP, a firm and nonprofit must work together, collectively addressing community needs such that the value provided by these partnerships can have a direct impact on the community. Thus, this study is one of the first to offer an understanding of the processes and fundamental mechanisms through which CSR initiatives, such as EVPs, can lead to a particular outcome, and specifically social capital.

In this dissertation, the perspective of stakeholder groups in addition to the employee were sought in order to understand the social consequence of the EVP for the broader community. For example, Amy, who represents a nonprofit stated, “Without volunteers we could not do what we do.” It is the employees who volunteer on behalf of the firm and for their own gratification that help build networks of support. The thematic interpretation reveals that nonprofits benefit from the volume of help received from firms. Likewise, findings reveal that employees offer a diverse set of skills, many of which are beneficial to nonprofits and the broader community. As such, the need for matching EVP activities to employee skill-set is an important finding of this study. Indeed, firms and nonprofits can work together to build substantial social capital in the community provided there is a good fit between them.

This dissertation sought to explore EVPs as CSR among apparel firms and to understand the value of such programs for a firm’s stakeholders, specifically its employees and the community it serves. As represented in the conceptual framework (Figure 76; below), EVPs are part of a continuum, starting from a broader CSR focus, to one of utilizing firm resources for good (corporate philanthropy) in the form of EVPs. This continuum is reflected within findings of this study, which suggest that stakeholders view corporate philanthropy as an obligation and an essential aspect of CSR strategy. Findings suggest that, ultimately, individuals and groups are motivated to engage in EVPs for various reasons, whether a sense of obligation, a desire to help others, to spend time with peers, to network, or to learn. This study reveals how and why EVPs clearly benefit multiple stakeholders, but that it is the community that benefits the most through

relationships that forge social capital. The EVP is a conduit of action that allows employees to use time and effort to improve the communities in which their employers operate. The motivation to participate (equity), when combined with the relationship prompted by the EVP (social exchange) produces social capital (bonding and bridging) that helps to better the community. Finally, it is not a single EVP event, but the totality of multiple events, that establishes a firm's value within the community, and more broadly, within society as a whole.



*Figure 76. Conceptual Framework: Social Capital as an Outcome of CSR*

### Summary

In this chapter, the broader issues that emerged from the thematic interpretation were discussed, including the links between CSR, corporate philanthropy, and EVPs. Also included was examination of the implications of the interpretation relative to the theories of equity, social exchange, and social capital. In the next chapter, conclusions are offered and suggestions for future research are provided.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **REFLECTION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This dissertation is one of the first in-depth academic studies to be conducted on employee volunteer programs as a CSR strategy in the apparel industry. The aim of this dissertation was to develop an in-depth understanding of participation in employer-led volunteer programs from the viewpoint of those stakeholders directly impacted by such efforts, specifically employees and community members. To this end, I sought to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry, and to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy practiced by U.S. apparel firms. This study addresses gaps within the marketing and management literatures regarding the motivations for employee participation in such CSR initiatives, as well as the social consequences of these initiatives for local communities.

This is one of the first studies to consider the perspective of multiple stakeholders, specifically employees of apparel firms, along with those who represent the local community through nonprofits. In doing so, findings bring to light the outcomes of CSR at the individual stakeholder level. Additionally, this dissertation highlights the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community. As a result, the findings reveal implications for apparel firm CSR strategy, including EVPs, as a form of corporate philanthropy. Last, findings of this dissertation have practical implications for firms interested in expanding CSR initiatives to include employee

volunteer programs to address issues affecting local communities. As the final chapter of this dissertation, the goals of this chapter are to discuss the research process and to consider the relevance of findings for theory and practice. To do so, this chapter is divided into four sections: (1) *Reflecting on the Process*, (2) *Theoretical Implications of the Outcomes*, (3) *Practical Implications of the Outcomes*, and (4) *Limitations and Future Research*. In the first section, I reflect on the goals and objectives relative to the ethnographic research process employed to collect and interpret data. Next, the significant findings that emerged through data interpretation, and the implications of these findings, are presented. Last, I conclude with a discussion of the limitations of this study and suggest potential future areas of research.

### **Reflecting on the Process**

In this study, I employed ethnographic methods to gain an in-depth understanding of EVPs as a form of CSR, and specifically corporate philanthropy, in the apparel industry. Through the application of multiple data collection methods — including participant observation, interviews, and visual documentation — the experiences of both employees and community members as stakeholders were captured. The ethnographic approach to data collection allowed me to gain insider access to apparel firm EVPs. Moreover, utilizing participant observation as a data collection method allowed me to experience the EVP as an employee of an apparel firm might. It was through active participation in the EVPs that I was able to speak to employees and community members associated with the nonprofits about their personal experiences with these activities. Additionally, this approach allowed me to create bonds with participants to gain further

information through in-depth interviews after the events concluded. Last, I utilized visual documentation to enrich both my observations and my interviews with participants by providing visual records as part of my field notes.

As a participant observer, I volunteered alongside employees of apparel firms. By doing so, I experienced the same feelings of fellowship and accomplishment that participants expressed during their interviews. As a result, I made new connections with employees of apparel firms and community members. These connections are similar to the benefits of networking gained from EVPs as expressed by participants in this study. Participants were accepting of my presence, as if I was a peer or fellow employee of the firm, and included me in all of their activities. For instance, I was often encouraged to join in group photos before or after the EVP activity (see Figure 45 on page 156 and Figure 49 on page 185).

Through the act of volunteering, I built a rapport with employees of apparel firms, which further aided my access to gathering more in-depth data. Interestingly, my interactions in the field with participants actually provided richer data than many of the in-depth interviews. Participants spoke candidly of their experiences in the field, versus what appeared to be rehearsed and guarded responses when interviewed after the EVP occurred. This may be because many of the participants were interviewed while at work, which, obviously, could have curtailed their responses. Additionally, this is likely why many sought to portray their employers in a positive light during the formal interviews.

Although some participants were eager to discuss their experiences, not all were very welcoming. However, the goal of this dissertation was to understand the value of the



EVP to multiple stakeholders. Thus, I sought to capture the experience of both those who are actively involved and those who may not be as interested. Yet, when approaching participants that were not actively engaged, I found that they were not always receptive to having a conversation with me. While I was able to get contact information for a follow-up interview from a few of these individuals, none of them responded to my requests for interviews. Thus, it was difficult to access the perspective of those who possibly view volunteering less favorably, or who may not have wanted to be involved in the EVP but felt pressured to attend. Additionally, due to all but one of the EVPs being conducted off site, it was nearly impossible to speak to employees who chose not to participate. Thus, these difficulties limited the stakeholder perspective to those who wanted to participate in an EVP and who were willing to discuss their experiences with employer-led activities with me.

In addition to the employee as stakeholder, I sought to understand the significance of EVPs for the local community by interacting and engaging with nonprofit representatives and/or community members. Although interacting and connecting with at least one community member associated with each nonprofit was not difficult, one challenge I encountered during data collection was recruiting additional participants from the nonprofit or community-at-large. Due to the size and scope of most of the EVPs I observed for this dissertation, additional community members were either absent from the event or too busy to interact and did not want to speak either onsite or after the event. Specifically, when I asked one individual from the *State Food Bank* if I could follow-up with questions in regards to the partnership with the firm, she replied, “No, I don’t have

time.” Similarly, one of the representatives from *Second Chance* would not allow me to speak to other volunteers or clients of the nonprofit. She simply stated, “We don’t know who you are.” It was evident that time is a precious commodity to nonprofits and confidentiality is important as well. Although the nonprofit partners who volunteered and engaged alongside apparel firm employees were eager to talk about the mission and needs of the nonprofit, they seemed hesitant to engage in in-depth conversations, perhaps wary of my motives. Thus, the interviews with nonprofit partners tended to consist mostly of generalizations in regards to volunteering and focused on the needs of the nonprofit, versus those of the broader community. Interestingly, this process helped me to build a relationship with some of the nonprofits, as a few have since reached out asking me to return to volunteer.

Gaining access to apparel firms was a challenge. Indeed, I was unable to gain entry into firms lacking robust, publicly-publicized CSR strategies. Thus, the apparel firms in this study were chosen for their existing commitment to CSR and community initiatives. Another challenge was the long-term commitment of the firms during the dissertation process. For instance, one of the firms I was scheduled to partner with failed to follow-up once the data collection process got underway, which meant that I had to remove this firm from the intended sample. Similarly, I was scheduled to visit Founders Inc.’s corporate office for an EVP event but the gatekeeper decided, “[I] would not get anything out of it, they are just going to a soup kitchen.” Thus, for Founders Inc. I was limited to the perspective of apparel retail employees working in stores. Such responses

were frustrating, as I was hoping to gain additional perspectives and experience a wide range of EVPs.

Nevertheless, the EVPs held by the four firms in this study provided a vast assortment of activities for me to observe. One activity was so involved that it was difficult to engage, therefore I chose to leave the site and not to include it in my data collection. In this particular activity, the firm partnered with a nonprofit to clear a vacant lot and create a community shared space. The EVP event included laying stonework, building a bridge, creating a pond and water feature, and constructing raised planting beds. Due to the construction equipment and for safety reasons, I chose not stay at this event, however I returned at the end of the day to view the progress (see Figure 77).



*Figure 77. Community Shared Space EVP not included in this Study. (Photo by author)*

In a similar vein, some of the EVP events did not offer an opportunity for me to engage with the multiple employees involved. For example, Abington invited me to a kayak river clean-up. I declined to participate due to the potential for lack of interaction with others, much like my experience with the *Waterways Clean-up* activity that I did observe. Like the participants involved with the EVP, I was unaware of the activity until I arrived. Because teams were divided into groups of two, it was difficult to engage with others. However, I chose to stay and observe this particular event, in the hopes of gaining some perspective from the participants I paired with. These particular employees were new to the company and both worked in the sustainability department. Interestingly, the gatekeeper for RGM suggested I participate in this event. It was evident the gatekeeper

was more concerned with who I interacted with versus the quantity or quality of interactions that occurred. This was frustrating, as I would have preferred to engage with more individuals to gain additional insight into the EVP.

It was clear that my gatekeepers wanted to connect me to individuals and/or EVPs that were actively engaged and well-organized. This often resulted in a positively-skewed perspective regarding the firm's CSR activities. This perspective was evident in the fact that most employees had participated in previous EVP events sponsored by their employer. However, some participants were able to reflect on their first time engaging in an EVP. Likewise, due to the repeated engagement of the firms in communities, the nonprofit participant perspectives also revealed a similarly positive response. This response was reflected in the partnership that was built between the firm and nonprofit, as well as the continued engagement between the two.

An important aspect of this dissertation is that it is one of the first investigations of EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy. Interestingly, during the research process, one of the four firms observed in this dissertation changed its CSR purpose to include an additional commitment to local communities. This change signals to me that the topic of this dissertation is both timely and relevant to apparel firms. Overall, I learned that employees care about the local community and want their employers to be integral to creating social change by using firm resources for good. As a mechanism for sharing the importance of EVPs, the hope is that this study will influence other apparel firms to do the same and extend these initiatives to firms in the retail industry more broadly. The academic significance of the findings is discussed in the next section.

## **Theoretical Implications of the Outcomes**

As discussed in previous chapters of this dissertation, exploring CSR through the lens of corporate philanthropy, and specifically EVPs, offers a dimension that is currently lacking in the literature. In general, this study also responds to recent calls for researchers to discuss the micro-level perspectives of CSR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012), employee participation in EVPs (Benjamin, 2001; Booth, Park, & Glomb, 2009; Grant, 2012; Jones, 2010), and to contribute theoretical perspectives to literature (Folse, Niedrich, & Grau, 2010; Tschirhart, 2005; Van Marrewijk, 2003). Thus, the investigation into EVPs of apparel firms presented by this dissertation revealed findings that have implications for academic literature across a variety of disciplines, including marketing and management. In this part of the chapter, discussion of these implications is organized into four sections: (1) *Connecting Through CSR*, (2) *Why Should I Volunteer?* (3) *It's Called Social Responsibility*, and (4) *A Framework for Success*.

### **Connecting Through CSR**

As this study reveals, EVPs can be the primary strategy within a firm's philanthropic initiatives. It is clear that EVPs exemplify philanthropy by offering human capital, in the form of volunteerism, to address the needs of local communities. As a result, a key finding of this dissertation is that EVPs offer an important means to connect a firm and its employees to the local community. Moreover, this study is one of the first to examine apparel firm CSR strategy in the US. Importantly, though the international literature on the topic of CSR focuses on CSR initiatives relative to the supply chain (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014; Graafland, 2002; Kaur, 2016; Schramm-Klein et al., 2015;

Zaczkiewicz, 2016), this dissertation makes it clear that a firm's philanthropic efforts at home are very important to its employees.

Additionally, though multiple studies exist that assess consumer perceptions of a firm's CSR-related activities (Fatma & Rahman, 2015; Green & Peloza, 2015), few studies examine other stakeholder group perceptions, including the employee, the stakeholder group that is most often relied upon to implement specific CSR strategies (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Jones et al., 2018; Korschun et al., 2014; Lam & Khare, 2010; Pedersen, Lauesen, & Kourula, 2017; Rupp et al., 2013). As a result, a key academic contribution of this study is that it sheds light on CSR from new and different stakeholder perspectives, thereby augmenting the literature on CSR strategy.

Another key implication of this study for the literature is the finding that employees of US-based apparel firms view CSR and related community initiatives as an expectation. Although Carroll's (1991) model of CSR, as discussed in Chapter I, situates philanthropy as discretionary and the "least important" construct of CSR, findings of the present study equate philanthropy with the economic responsibilities of apparel firms. As the thematic interpretation of the data reveals, employees of US-based apparel firms view CSR as the interwoven relationship between people, planet, and profit, supporting the three-pronged approach to sustainability known as the *Triple Bottom Line* (Elkington, 1997). Moreover, the findings point to the extent to which each of the three factors is of equal importance to the others.

As depicted in the conceptual framework guiding this study, CSR is the foundation of an EVP, and, in turn, through it, can make a positive impact in local

communities. As revealed in this study, employees of US-based apparel firms expect businesses to contribute to society and see CSR as the connection between the firm, its employees, and the local community. As such, findings indicate that through the strategic application of resources, firms can offer support in the areas that matter most to stakeholders. This is an important area of research as apparel firms continue to implement and expand CSR initiatives, in as much as further research will shed light on the symbiotic relationships between apparel firms and the communities that they do business in.

Another key finding of this dissertation is that a firm's internal and external stakeholders appear to share similar expectations. As external stakeholders, community members view firms as being rich in resources, and they hope firms will act responsibly by reinvesting profits to meet the needs of the local community. Much like CSR research that focuses on ways a firm can lessen its negative impact on natural resources or the environment (Gaskill-Fox et al., 2014; Graafland, 2002; Kaur, 2016; Schramm-Klein et al., 2015; Zaczekiewicz, 2016), the present study reveals other kinds of impact that can occur through CSR, including the community building that occurs through philanthropy in the form of EVPs. That is, community building is achieved through the capital accrued from the bonding between employees and the bridging between the firms and its various stakeholder groups.

Findings of this study reveal multiple stakeholder perspectives on the importance of integrating philanthropy, and specifically EVPs, into a firm's CSR strategy. As firms are looking to engage in community partnerships, stakeholders are also looking to apparel



firms to make a difference by acting as good corporate citizens. Although this study focuses on the connections between two stakeholder groups through the EVP, there is an opportunity to expand research to other groups, such as business partners and consumers. The key is understanding what motivates the desire among individuals to have a positive impact.

### **Why Should I Volunteer?**

According to Adams (1965), equity theory explains the motivation to participate in a fair and just initiative. As the findings of this dissertation reveal, employees of apparel firms expressed similar motivations to engage in EVPs that are sponsored by their employers. Participants think that it is fair for the firm to ask its employees to help those in need, and even view EVPs as a workplace benefit. Indeed, the positive aspects of working together and fulfilling personal and community needs were often found to be the driving factors in their EVP participation.

The data collected for this study reveal that employees view EVPs much like an employee benefit, and their desire to participate in an EVP seems largely driven by the various rewards associated with the cost of participating in an activity. Ease of participation is one factor in particular that stood out when participants discussed EVP costs versus rewards. In contrast to Merz, Peloza, and Chen (2010), who examined standardization of corporate philanthropy, findings of this dissertation highlight the importance of an individualized approach to EVPs and the need to account for multiple stakeholder interests and goals in the EVP process. Participants also recognize that the level of EVP engagement may vary from person to person, which is a key finding, as it

suggests the importance of understanding why employees are more interested in certain EVP events than others. Because not all stakeholders are the same, it would be useful to further examine the individual differences between employees when implementing such philanthropic CSR strategies.

Another workplace benefit of the EVP that surfaced in this study is the pleasure that participants derive from the activity. As employees, participants talked about the chance to bond with coworkers, meet community members, and the overall enjoyment they experience from the act of helping others. Interestingly, participants genuinely enjoyed the time away from work and most viewed the EVP as an effective use of their time. Thus, the positive feelings and experiences associated with an EVP activity are also motivations for participation.

Although previous studies offer insight into why employees volunteer, and the perceptions of their peers who volunteer in the workplace (Grant, 2012; Rodell, 2013; Rodell & Lynch, 2016), this dissertation reveals personal and community benefits as driving factors in engagement. That is, in exchange for engagement in an EVP as a CSR initiative, employees are looking to make a positive impact on others. For example, several employees shared specific stories of how their actions improved the broader community. At the same time, on a personal level, it is important to employees to know that they are making a difference and contributing to society.

An important finding of this study is the extent to which it reveals how EVPs meet community needs by prompting employees to use their particular skillsets or occupational expertise. That is, employees are often experts in their line of work, and can

provide much needed assistance to local nonprofit organizations. As a result, nonprofits engage with for-profit firms in the form of EVPs to not only benefit the nonprofit, but also the broader community and stakeholders it serves. Few studies consider the benefits of EVPs to other stakeholders. This study found that employees view their time spent at an EVP as beneficial to the community, and that nonprofits also value the assistance received through such actions. However, it is important to note that it is necessary to balance the needs of both employees and the community when implementing EVP initiatives, as it appears that not all opportunities are considered to be a valuable use of employee time.

### **It's Called Social Responsibility**

According to Carroll (1979), CSR refers to the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of an organization. As the findings of this dissertation indicate, social responsibility is the obligation of a firm to employ a cycle of benefit for itself, its employees, and the community it does business in. Application of Blau's (1964) social exchange theory further explains the reciprocal social obligations that exist between a firm and its stakeholders. As such, the results of this study reveal that stakeholders perceive a shared responsibility for others and see CSR, and specifically corporate philanthropy, as an investment of firm resources in local communities that acts as a catalyst for change.

As found in this dissertation, stakeholders share the belief that firms must do more with what they have. Very few studies have addressed the employee-as-stakeholder perspective beyond upper-level managers and CEOs (Liket & Simaens, 2015). This study

is one of the first to focus on US-based apparel firm employees from various organizational levels within the firm, ultimately revealing that employees view the use of firm resources in the form of the EVP as an investment in local communities. Indeed, they think that the investment of time by employees creates a cycle of benefit for the community. This finding is significant because firms will often implement EVPs specifically to improve society by filling a void not addressed by local, state, or federal programs. In this study, such gaps emerged in the form of food pantries, urban beautification efforts, and so on. Although previous research has identified the gaps in terms of the social consequences of CSR initiatives (Margolis & Walsh, 2003), the present study is one of the first to reveal the reciprocal benefits of EVPs among multiple stakeholders. Moreover, while previous literature highlights the importance of CSR abroad, stakeholders in this study identified personal connections to local communities at home. In fact, stakeholders developed a greater understanding of local needs as a result of their EVP engagement. Thus, this study reveals the ways that EVPs offer shared value to apparel firm employees and the local community.

Although previous studies have identified the ethical dimensions of organizational decision-making (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012), this is one of the first studies to consider the exchange relationship that is developed by stakeholders through a shared purpose. Findings of this dissertation therefore add to the literature by identifying CSR efforts as an obligation of the firm to do more than make a profit. As discussed in the thematic interpretation, CSR strategy is seen as a means of extending support to external stakeholders, and not just limiting the benefits to internal stakeholders.

Another contribution this dissertation makes specific to CSR relates to philanthropy as a shared benefit for many. Findings from this study highlight the need to balance philanthropy in the form of monetary donations along with human capital in the form of volunteerism. Participants, as employees and community members, discussed volunteerism as a means of providing increased value to and impact on the community. That is, the investment that firms and their employees make in the community is recognized as an added value by internal and external stakeholders. Although previous research outlined the obligations of business to society relative to social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), the present study identifies the extent to which nonprofits and community members as stakeholders are equally integral to CSR strategy, and establishes the EVP as a necessary function of CSR to create a positive social impact at home.

### **A Framework for Success**

As this study reveals, EVPs seek to address community problems by providing much needed firm resources. Very few studies have addressed the impact of apparel firm CSR strategies at home (e.g., in the US). As discussed in Chapter II, the literature sheds light on the benefits of EVPs to the firm. However, the present study is one of the first to examine the benefits of EVPs to stakeholders and the broader community. Moreover, this study moves beyond exploration of the topic relative to firm reputation or individual job performance, to investigate external factors, including the broader impacts on the local community. Findings of this study are the first to connect US-based apparel firm CSR

strategy in the form of EVPs to nonprofits in the local community as a means of addressing important societal issues.

By examining the motivations to engage in an EVP and the significance of doing so through the lens of social capital theory, it becomes clear that philanthropy is more than just discretionary action by a firm. According to Coleman (1988), social capital is a resource that is formed when individuals interact and develop relationships with each other. As revealed by this study, stakeholders join together to implement EVPs, not only to improve society, but to form stronger bonds between the firm, its employees, and the community. As a result, an important finding relates to the two types of capital revealed through the efforts of the EVP. That is, employees strengthen their peer relationships through bonding and the new connections formed through the bridging that occurs between firm employees and nonprofits. Thus, not only do firms see value in EVPs, but stakeholders also recognize the benefits of such programs, as EVPs are an opportunity for firm employees and the local community to form effective partnerships.

This research also highlights the ways that an EVP can be an educational tool. As seen in this dissertation, EVPs act as conduits of information, educating firm employees about the mission of nonprofits and the benefits they provide to local communities. It is hoped that through EVPs, apparel firms can increase civic engagement among employees, and, in turn, make a greater social impact. Finding from this dissertation also highlight the potential long-term benefits of EVPs as CSR. According to Davis and Searcy (2010), corporate initiatives and public policy are rarely discussed in annual sustainability reporting, yet this dissertation points to the positive impact that can occur

from a greater awareness of CSR strategy. Additionally as firms in the apparel industry and beyond look to effect social change, findings from this study offer insight into the impact of implementing EVPs as a form of corporate CSR strategy.

Finally, this study is one of the first to develop a conceptual theoretical model relative to EVPs. EVPs are a CSR strategy designed to bring stakeholders together for the common good. New social networks were established through the EVP events observed in this dissertation. This study is therefore one of the first to identify the social consequences of CSR initiatives like corporate philanthropy, and specifically EVPs. This study also extends understanding of the benefits of involvement beyond the firm and its employees to consider community members as stakeholders. As a result, it sets the stage for future research that examines the long-term effects of EVPs on external stakeholders and local communities.

In sum, this study is important because it offers further evidence that CSR is important to both internal and external stakeholders of US-based apparel firms. Additionally, this study provides clear indication that employees view volunteerism as a necessary component of corporate philanthropy and CSR. Employees are motivated to volunteer not only by the enjoyment derived from the activity, but the opportunity it provides to make a difference “at home.” In the same vein, nonprofits and community members look to for-profit firms for support and perceive the benefits of the EVP as instrumental to supporting a prosperous community. The EVP improves social relations between the firm, its stakeholders and its community, ultimately building bonds, bridging relationships, and accruing social capital for the greater good.

### **Practical Implications of the Outcomes**

Along with the theoretical or academic implications of this study, several practical implications also emerged. For example, little is known about the role of volunteerism in the workplace. To this end, this study revealed the behavioral decision-making processes of employees as related to individual motivations to participate in EVPs, and the value that such participation provides for the firm. A key finding that emerged on this topic is that there is a great deal of opportunity for apparel firms to integrate employees into the CSR decision-making process.

Along the same lines, the four apparel firms observed in this dissertation demonstrate a strong commitment to CSR. As a result, in all four cases the firm's commitment to CSR has become linked to its overall corporate culture. Accordingly, apparel firms interested in implementing similar programs should consider linking CSR initiatives to the mission and/or values of the firm, with the ultimate goal being the shaping of a responsible corporate culture. Doing so could prompt increased employee engagement in CSR initiatives. Additionally, there is the potential to incorporate CSR as corporate culture during the hiring process with further reinforcement during annual employee reviews. Likewise, findings reveal that when a culture of giving is established by a firm, employees notice and cite this culture as a reason to engage in EVP activities. Such findings point to the ways that increased engagement in future firm-driven initiatives, both inside and outside of the realm of CSR, could be achieved.

It is clear that EVPs are important to some employees. Highlighting philanthropic efforts may offer a competitive advantage not only to apparel firms but to firms in other



industries, and this competitive advantage may translate to other stakeholders. That is, stakeholders may choose to do business with and work for a firm that emphasizes being active in the local community. However, the employees that participated in this study sought choice in the matter of engagement. Indeed, proper fit of the EVP was found to be important to both employees and nonprofits. Therefore, it is important to understand the wants and needs of all parties involved to ensure that connections are established through a shared purpose. By aligning EVPs to employee interests and skills, a firm may increase engagement, not just in EVP events, but in other CSR-related strategies.

This dissertation found that employee participation in EVPs is driven by the chance to engage not only with co-workers, but with members of the local community. Findings indicate that participants gain a sense of solidarity from participation in EVP events, and this, in-turn, can benefit both the firm and the local community through increased civic engagement. Interestingly, Abington was the only firm that involved additional stakeholders, such as business partners, suppliers, and local high school students in its EVP events. By extending the opportunity to individuals beyond internal stakeholders, social impact can be further increased. Additionally, some apparel retailers are seeking to involve consumers in their EVPs efforts. For instance, a few apparel retailers are starting to post volunteer events on their websites and social media accounts, asking the general public and consumers to engage with them and their employees in volunteer efforts. Future study of how such efforts can encourage involvement with additional internal and external stakeholder groups would help to further increase volunteer participation and in new ways.

As stated in Chapter II, corporate initiatives and public policy are rarely discussed in annual sustainability reporting among for-profit firms. As firms increase their local CSR efforts in the form of corporate philanthropy and EVPs, there appears to be a need to link firm efforts with those of federal, state, and local government. Although some of the EVPs in this study were well organized, the efforts of the firm and the support offered to nonprofits and the community were not always communicated to other stakeholder groups, such as consumers or other community members. Thus, there appears to be a need to increase communication sharing between firms, nonprofits, and local municipalities.

Interestingly, the U.S. government has largely ignored corporate citizenship over the past several years, and 2017 was the first time since its inception in 1999 that the Secretary of State's *Award for Corporate Excellence* was not actually awarded. Additionally, in 2015 the United States helped shape the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). Yet, currently, the U.S. National Statistics for the UN Sustainable Development Goals website states, "This site is a work in progress" and the most recent statistics available are from 2016. Thus, while policymakers have worked in years past to identify social problems and seek ways to recognize firm efforts to address them, the current trend in government seems to be to ignore such needs. Conversely, the firms observed in this dissertation have actually increased engagement with the UN's SDGs. As a result, progress towards the SDGs is clearly identified on firm websites and reported on in their CSR reports. In sum, the practical implications offered by the findings are

important not just for apparel firms and community nonprofits, but for policymakers looking to support local communities and create positive social change.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

In this dissertation, I explored EVPs as CSR among apparel firms using an ethnographic approach to research. By doing so, I was able to investigate the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the community it serves. While the findings are significant to enriching and enhancing the literatures in the areas of CSR, corporate philanthropy, and volunteerism, findings are limited to the apparel firms and brands included herein. Likewise, the apparel firms observed in this study are Fortune 500 companies, publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange. In light of this limitation, it is suggested that future studies be carried out on other apparel firms, both public and private, to explore similarities and differences between organizational structure and firm size. Additionally, this particular study was conducted in urban areas of New England and the Southern United States. Future studies could examine whether similarities or differences arise that may be related to the geographic location and size of the community and the various cultural differences therein. In the same vein, a cross-cultural study could explore the different global perspectives of CSR strategy and corporate philanthropy in local communities around the world.

As highlighted throughout the thematic interpretation chapters, three of the four firms observed in this study have been involved with corporate philanthropy and volunteerism for over 25 years. Likewise, in order to fully understand the value of CSR and philanthropic initiatives, firms globally recognized for a strong commitment to CSR

were specifically chosen. Future research could explore companies that are not recognized for their CSR initiatives. Likewise, it would be interesting to note whether differences exist in the hiring and/or review process of employees in firms with differing levels of emphasis placed on CSR, and specifically EVP engagement.

As discussed in the reflection portion of this chapter, my role as a participant-observer imposed limitations on who I could interact with in regards to CSR and EVPs. It would therefore be prudent to investigate not only firms with weaker CSR strategies, but to include employees who are not as committed to CSR initiatives like EVPs. The apparel industry is dominated by women, who comprise over 80% of its total workforce (Kaur, 2016). Likewise, 78.5% of the employees interviewed in this study were women. While the sample reflects the gender of the majority employed in the apparel industry, little is known about other factors that may impact employee perceptions of CSR and specifically EVPs. Although participants provided me with their job title, time with firm, and age, the value of CSR as it relates to demographic factors was not examined. As seen in the organizational behavior and management literatures, time in position and job title can affect organizational commitment, therefore it would be interesting to know if differences occur between employees as stakeholders that are tied to such demographics.

Last, this study included the community as stakeholder perspective. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the voice of the nonprofit member and community stakeholder was limited. Although this is one of the first CSR studies to include the perspective of nonprofits and community members as stakeholders, there remains much to be explored. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of EVPs, and the social capital

that comes from these events, on communities. Moreover, individuals representing government and public policy groups could provide additional stakeholder perspective that is missing from this study.

To conclude, the twofold purpose of this study was: (1) to explore EVPs as CSR among apparel firms, and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholders, specifically its employees and the communities it serves. By exploring EVPs as form of CSR, I developed an in-depth understanding of such programs, the benefits they provide both employees of apparel firms and nonprofits, and the social capital accrued for the firm and the community. This exploration was guided by four objectives: (1) to explore corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR in the apparel industry, (2) to investigate EVPs as a type of corporate philanthropy, (3) to examine the employee perspective on EVPs as stakeholders, and (4) to consider the impact of EVPs, corporate philanthropy, and CSR within the context of the local community.

Specific to the first research objective, it was found that, as stakeholder groups, both employees and community members view apparel firms as being rich in resources and expect that firms will utilize such resources to address community needs. In relation to the second objective, both EVPs and monetary donations are recognized as corporate philanthropy, yet both employees of apparel firms and nonprofits recognize the increased value that EVPs offer the broader community over donations of money. It appears that the potential positive impact is greater through EVPs than through just financial support. In relation to the third objective, employees enjoy participating in EVPs and see them as a proactive means of offering assistance to those who need it most. Relative to the final

objective, findings direct attention to the social capital implications of EVPs as a form of CSR strategy. That is, this dissertation reveals that a network of support is formed through the connection between a firm, its employees, and the local community created by the EVP. Thus, through the resources provided by the firm, stakeholders work together to satisfy the needs of local communities.

In conclusion, this dissertation applies a novel approach to the topic of CSR, as it is one of the first studies to use the viewpoint of the apparel industry employee as a point of departure for understanding the impact of corporate philanthropy and EVPs. Findings add depth to CSR research while pointing the way to future research. Specifically, findings augment Carroll's (1979) framework of CSR by positioning philanthropy as an expectation of a for-profit firm and thereby forge new research avenues within the field. As corporate philanthropy, EVPs are CSR strategies designed to utilize firm resources for the greater local good. The EVP offers more than just people-power to nonprofits. As seen in this dissertation, the EVP provides them with much needed help in many areas, from mentoring to merchandising.

Most people spend 40 hours or more a week at work. The rest of the time they spend as participating members of the communities in which they live. When firms and their employees invest in their local communities, the effects are multiplied, benefiting internal and external stakeholders of the firm. This investment, in turn, strengthens the relationships between firm, employee, and community, with the hopes of creating lasting social impact. As government support for local nonprofits and communities lessens, the need for for-profit firms to fill the gaps increases, and, indeed, stakeholders now expect

it. As this dissertation illustrates, many employees are eager to help, as they are community members themselves, and therefore, they are as much stakeholders of the community as they are stakeholders of the firm.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

**Setting:**

Date:

Start Time:

End Time:

Location:

Weather:

**The participants:**

Observer:

Nonprofit:

Apparel Firm:

Number of nonprofit representatives:

Number of apparel firm employees:

Other individuals present:

**Activities and interactions:**

The employee volunteer activity:

Interactions:

Mood:

**Conversations:**

Between volunteers:

Between volunteers and nonprofit members:

Between observer and volunteers:

Between observer and nonprofit members:

**APPENDIX B**  
**FIELD INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Interview Schedule: Apparel Firm Employee**

1. Why are you volunteering today?
2. Tell me about your experience today.
3. What activities did you engage in while volunteering?
4. Anything you liked best? Least?
5. Did you get to select this volunteer activity or location?
6. What have you learned during today's volunteer event?
7. Was this a productive use of your time? Why or why not?

**Interview Schedule: Community Member**

1. What is the purpose of today's volunteer event?
2. Tell me about your experience today.
3. What activities took place today?
4. Anything you liked best? Least?
5. Did you get to select this activity or group?
6. What have you learned during today's volunteer event?
7. Was this a productive use of your time? Why or why not?

**APPENDIX C**  
**IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Interview Schedule: Apparel Firm Employee**

1. How long have you worked with your company?
2. What is your position?
3. Why do you work for this company?
4. What does your company stand for (mission statement, vision, etc.)?
5. What is corporate social responsibility?
6. Describe some of your company's CSR initiatives.
  - a. Do you agree with them?
  - b. Why or why not?
7. What are some ways your company does "good" for the community?
8. Does CSR matter when looking for a job?
9. Does CSR matter to you?
10. Was this your first-time volunteering with your employer?
11. Tell me about your volunteering experience.
  - a. Why did you participate in this volunteer event?
  - b. What was your volunteer activity?
  - c. Why was this activity chosen?
  - d. Who volunteered with you?
  - e. What did you like best/least?
12. Do you plan on volunteering again? Why/why not?



13. How are volunteer events communicated to employees by your employer?
14. Would you encourage your co-workers to volunteer? Why/why not?
15. What community causes does your employer support?
16. What community causes do you support?
17. What does your boss or upper management say about volunteering?
18. What do your co-workers say about volunteering?
19. Should volunteering be required? Explain.
20. Is there anything else you want to tell me that we have not discussed?

**On a scale of 1-5 with 1 representing Strongly Disagree and 5 representing Strongly Agree, please rate the following questions:**

21. The CSR volunteer activities suggested by my company align with my skill set.
22. The CSR volunteer activities suggested by my company are a productive use of my time.
23. The CSR volunteer activities suggested by my company improve the company's community image.
24. The CSR volunteer activities suggested by my company improve the company's profitability.
25. If I participate in the CSR volunteer activities suggested by my company my salary will increase.
26. If I participate in the CSR volunteer activities suggested by my company I will be promoted.

### **Interview Schedule: Community Member**

1. How long have you been associated with the nonprofit?
2. What is your relationship with the nonprofit?
3. Tell me about your experience with the volunteer event.
  - a. What was the activity?
  - b. Why was this activity chosen?
  - c. Who participated?
  - d. What were the strengths/weaknesses of the event?
  - e. Should this be done again?
4. Anything you like or dislike about the volunteer event?
5. What impact does this event have on:
  - a. You?
  - b. The nonprofit?
  - c. The company?
  - d. The community?
6. What are the needs of the community?
  - a. Are they being addressed by this event?
  - b. If so how? If not, what can be done differently?
7. What does corporate social responsibility mean to you? Does it matter?
8. Do you view this company as a responsible company? Why/why not?
9. What are the benefits/disadvantages of partnering with this company?
10. What is your impression of the company that provided volunteers today?

11. What impact does the company have on the nonprofit and/or community?
12. Have you purchased anything from this company? If so, what prompted you to buy products from this company?
13. Is there anything else you may want to tell me that we have not discussed?

**APPENDIX D**  
**IRB APPROVAL FORM**



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY**  
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Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

**To:** Tara Konya  
Cons, Apparel, and Ret Stds  
Cons, Apparel, and Ret Stds

**From:** UNCG IRB

**Date:** 7/17/2017

**RE:** Determination that Research or Research-Like Activity does not require IRB Approval

**Study #:** 17-0213

**Study Title:** CSR, Corporate Philanthropy, and Employee Volunteer Programs in the Apparel Industry

This submission was reviewed by the above-referenced IRB. The IRB has determined that this submission does not constitute human subjects research as defined under federal regulations [45 CFR 46.102 (d or f)] and does not require IRB approval.

**Study Description:**

The following research will explore corporate social responsibility (CSR) from the perspective of the employee. An exploratory study (16-0061) of employee perceptions of CSR was completed last year. The twofold purpose of this study is: (1) to explore employee volunteer programs (EVPs) as CSR among apparel firms and (2) to understand the value of such programs for a firm's stakeholder's specifically its employees and the communities it serves.

If your study protocol changes in such a way that this determination will no longer apply, you should contact the above IRB before making the changes.

**CC:**

Nancy Hodges, Cons, Apparel, and Ret Stds